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THORNPATH, THE TRAILER;

THE PERILS OF THE PRAIRIE

OR,

CHAPTER I

THE THORNPATH TRAILER

THE PERILS OF THE PRAIRIE

BY OLL COOMES,

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BEADLE AND ADAMS, PUBLISHERS,

93 WILLIAM STREET.

THORPETH, THE TRAILER;

THE PERILS OF THE PRAIRIE

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BE OLD OODER

THE DASHING LION
THE OLD SQUAD
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THE OLD SQUAD

NEW YORK

READER AND ADAMS PUBLISHERS

WILLIAM STREET

THORNPATH, THE TRAILER,

OR,

THE PERILS OF THE PRAIRIE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BESIEGED HUNTERS.

OUR story opens in the year 1820, at a point on the Des Moines river, some thirty miles below the mouth of the Racoon.

The sun had long since gone down in a sheen of purple and gold, and the queenly moon, with her host of starry courtiers, drifted slowly up the eastern slope, throwing a pale, melancholy light over the great prairies, the dark, green woodland, the silent rivers, the silvery lakes, the rippling brooks and the singing cascades. A soft breeze, laden with the perfume of wild flowers, floated over the wide expanse, fanning the tall, green grass into gentle billows, rustling the green robes of the forest trees, whispering among the boughs, sighing in the valleys. And, too, out upon its airy wings floated the soft, dulcet, weird-like strains of music, which, as it came over the water from the little island in the river, fell upon your ears with a wild, strange melody; yet there was naught in its enchanting strains to charm the heart of those dusky, phantom-like figures that with stolid faces and crouching forms glide hither and thither, their eyes ever fixed upon the little island. It was not that such music never before had been heard that gave it such wild melody, but that the slumbering echoes of this place never before had been awakened by aught save the savage war-whoop, death-song and scalp-cry; or the scream of some startled bird or the howling of wild beasts.

But that we may fully understand the origin of the strange music, we will cross over to the island whence it emanates and look upon the little group assembled there.

The island was a small circular spot in the center of the river, containing less than half an acre. It was covered with a dense growth of vegetation—principally willow and cotton wood bushes; and from the center a deep but narrow channel of water opened on the lower side of the island, giving a full view of the broad river below.

At the head of the channel and near the center of the island a camp-fire was burning, and around it were seated four men, who, as their half-civilized and half-savage garb denoted, were hunters and trappers—those hardy men of the great North-west.

Thede Thornpath, the eldest of the group, was a man of perhaps five and forty years of age. He was a little above medium height, erect, wiry and agile, with muscular limbs and well-knit frame; dark-gray eyes, that were expressive of the warmest friendship and deadliest hatred, and a well-defined head covered with long black hair, thickly penciled with gray.

Frank Harwood, who claims our attention next, was a young man of not more than three and twenty, and in addition to a fine form and handsome features, he bore the air of intellectual culture and refinement, such as could only be attained in the society of civilization.

Josiah Jenkins, the third person, was a long, lank individual of some thirty years, with small gray eyes, light hair, and a few long white hairs upon his chin which Josiah sported with great pride as whiskers. There was an all-important air about him that made him quite ludicrous to his friends and not very bearable by strangers.

The fourth and last person, who answered to the ancient name of Egypt, was a type of a different nationality, being an African, black as midnight. He was not more than five and twenty, and in form he was a model of health, strength and activity. But Egypt was an eccentric boy, and possessed one great failing, if failing it might be called, and that was his undying love for a fiddle. No difference at what time or place—at home or in the forest, a fiddle either was in his hands, or strapped upon his back in a baize bag. But for all this, he was a brave and excellent hunter, a kind and jovial companion. At one time Egypt had been a slave—

the property of a young southron, who, being of an adventuresome turn, took it into his head to spend a season hunting on the prairies of the great West, and, with his gun and slave set out for that region. However, soon after his arrival there he had the misfortune to lose both his life and scalp. Egypt, and his dearly beloved fiddle escaped and sought safety in Thede Thornpath's hut, where he was well liked and kindly treated. He soon became a great favorite among the hunters, and made a brave, daring and fearless hunter himself; but no difference whether in the hut or upon the trail, his fiddle was either at his back or in his hands, calling forth such strains as only Ole Bull could equal!

During the day these four friends had been journeying by water, and coming upon the little island about sunset, they concluded to encamp thereon for the night, as the place was an admirable one to guard against the sudden attacks of the Indians in whose country they were traveling.

Having landed and made fast their canoe, a fire was built near the center of the island, and some venison broiled for supper; and then, after their meal had been dispatched, Egypt produced his fiddle and began playing some beautiful airs—sweet, solemn, and melodious as a funeral march—such as had been the favorite airs of his ill-fated young master.

After awhile he laid aside the instrument with the remark:

"Best not handle dat ole fiddle too long; might git wool lifted to de tune ob a scalp-knife."

"No danger o' thet, Egypt," replied Thornpath, who had become greatly enamored with the music.

"Not a bit, not a bit of danger, Gyp," exclaimed Josiah Jenkins, with a very knowing and important air. "I jist wush 'bout a dozen reds *would* come over here, and I'd play that little Deer Creek affair over ag'in."

"W'at 'fair war dat?" asked the darky, with a distrustful grin upon his ebony features.

"Slathers!" exclaimed Josiah; "didn't you ever hear of me lickin' twelve reds in a fair up-and-down fight?—killed and scalped every dog of them—down on Deer Creek last year? Why, that's all over the country down there; and, to come right down to the facts of the matter, I'm sp'ilin' now fur just another sich a brush."

"'Spects you'd run if you'd see a Inging dis minit," said Egypt, with a sly wink at young Harwood.

"Fiddlesticks!" sneered Josiah; "jist don't spend your breath talkin' so soft. Come, play up that old fiddle; give us somethin' quick—somethin' to rouse the blood of old seventy-six; and if a Ingin comes nosin' round, jist let me know and I'll—"

"Hist!" commanded Thornpeth, turning his head to listen.

For a moment all remained silent, then the hunter said:

"I was sure I hearn a dippin' in the water, like oars."

"Yew don't say!" exclaimed Josiah, with quite a perceptible change in his voice.

Thornpeth arose, and carefully made the circuit of the island, and returned to his friends and reported that the noise he had heard was made by the water chafing the shore.

"I'm sorry," boasted Josiah. "I thought we were goin' to have some fun; however—"

The rest of his remarks were drowned in the sound of the darky's fiddle. Egypt had grown tired of his braggadocio, and, taking his fiddle, struck up a lively tune, much to the delight of Josiah, who began drumming his fingers upon his knees, trying to keep time to the music; and presently, when Egypt broke abruptly off onto a lively jig, he sprung to his feet and began dancing with all his might and main—his arms and legs dangling about like serpents suspended over a fire.

Egypt saw this performance greatly amused Thornpeth and Harwood, and to see Josiah still exert himself more, the darky quickened the music, and of course Josiah quickened his step. Now and then Egypt would give the fiddle-bow a sudden jerk, and Jenkins, to imitate the music, would make what he called a "splendid leap" into the air. For some minutes this amusement lasted, and, just as Josiah was making his last leap, a rifle on the west shore of the river pealed out, and simultaneously a cry of mortal pain escaped his lips and like a dead weight he fell to the earth.

"Red-skins!" burst from the lips of Thornpeth, as he sprung to his feet and seized his rifle.

"Oh, Lord! I'm shot!—I'm killed—I'm murdered!" burst from Josiah's lips, as he threw himself about on the ground like a headless chicken.

Thornpath and Egypt took up their rifles and began reconnoitering, while Harwood turned to attend to Josiah.

"Where are you hurt, Jenkins?" asked the young hunter.

"I'm shot—shot through the head—oh, salvation!" groaned the wounded man.

Harwood examined his head, and found that he had been hit sure enough, but instead of being shot through the head, his forehead had been merely grazed—a red welt showing where the bullet had touched.

"You are not hurt much; you are only scared," said Harwood.

"Oh, yes, I am! I'm dyin' now," persisted the Yankee, "and all this comes of that infurnel old fiddle and that cussed nigger."

"An' tripping de lite fantastic toe, as poor Marssa Bell use to say, and jumpin' so high," interrupted Egypt, when he found that Josiah was only scared.

"Oh, Egypt! Egypt! how can you mock a dyin' man?"

"A dyin' coward, ye means," said the darky.

"There, you thick-lipped brute, you've said enough; if I could only live I'd pay you—"

"Dat little drib ob tobaccy you owes?"

"Oh, salvation! salvation! this is too much to take of a nigger, and I'll be shot if *I do*!" and forgetting his pain in his momentary aggravation, Josiah sprung to his feet and made a drive at the negro, that would have undoubtedly sent him to grass had the latter not dodged the blow.

"Thar, thar, thet'll do, Josiah," exclaimed Thornpath "If yer still sp'ilin' fur a fite, ye can fite them Ingins."

All eyes were turned toward the western shore, where they beheld innumerable dark shadows moving about among the trees.

"I tell you, boys," said Thornpath, "the hull Sioux tribe's over thar, an' we've got to git away from this island afore they get over on the 'tother shore and surround it. If they do, we're gone up, fur they'll never leave here till they git our skulps."

"Oh, salvation!" exclaimed Josiah, in a tremulous tone, "how can we ever get away from here?"

"Don't know. 'Spects we'll have nudder Deer Creek

'fair," said Egypt, referring to Josiah's deeds of valor at Deer Creek.

"We've got to git away in the canoe," said the old hunter "once on the east shore and we're all right."

"But the red-skins on the west shore will fire upon us," said young Harwood.

"We'll have to keep the island atween us and the reds when we take to the canoe; and if you 'uns will keep watch I'll go and bring the canoe round to the east side. When I whistle, come."

The old hunter turned, and upon his hands and knees crawled through the thick vegetation toward the upper end of the island where they had left their canoe. In a moment he reached the edge of the island, and parting the thick foliage he peered out upon the river. Judge of his surprise and indignation on seeing their own canoe with an Indian in it, glide around an abrupt bend in the stream a short distance above the island.

"All right, all right, Mr. Red-skin," muttered the hunter, shaking his clenched fist at the fleeing savage boat-thief, "that war a right clever trick, but I'll beat you yit afore mornin' or give up the sobrikate o' Thornpath, the Trailer. Now mind."

The hunter turned and crawled back to his friends and communicated their loss to them.

"What will we do now?" asked Harwood.

"We've got to swim," replied the old Trailer.

"Oh! salvation! I'll drown," whined Josiah.

"Den dat'll save powder an' lead," said Egypt, with a grin.

Scarcely had the darky finished speaking, when a rifle-ball went whizzing in close proximity to his head, closely followed by a sharp report that seemed to come from the sky and resembled more a clap of thunder than the crack of a rifle.

All eyes were instantly turned toward the east shore—the direction whence the report had come—and to their surprise the hunters saw a puff of blue smoke drifting up from the top of a tall cottonwood tree that arose up many feet above its neighbors like a gigantic sentinel. And in among its boughs they could discern a dark something moving athwart the

clear sky. There was not a doubt but it was a red skin who had ascended the tree in order to get a view of the hunters within their inclosure of thick vegetation; and the fire that was burning would aid in directing their aim, so this was at once extinguished. Still the moving object could be seen, and Thornpath determined to dislodge it, if it was a savage.

Bringing his long rifle to bear, he fired. True enough, a wild, savage shriek rent the air, and a lifeless body went crashing down among the branches and struck the ground with a dull thud. Instantly there arose from the foot of the tree a wild, revengeful yell, such as could come from the throats of a score of infuriated savages.

Thornpath shook his head ominously as he said :

"Boys, this is a little the tightest place I war ever in. Ingins on two sides o' us and water on the other sides and no canoe—no possible chance o' escape. So we've a chance o' two things—to starve to death or be shot down by the red-skins!"

"Oh! salvation! salvation!"

CHAPTER II.

A DARING STRATAGEM.

NEVER had Thede Thornpath, the renowned Indian Trailer, allowed himself to be caught in such a predicament by the savages before. It is true he knew that he was in the Indian country, but he had no idea that there were any savages in the immediate vicinity, hence his uncautiousness. When he mentally reflected, he knew that the sound of Erypt's rifle had revealed their encampment; but, for that, no one was to blame more than himself, and he had only to make the best of their precarious situation, and devise some plan to escape.

Under the circumstances, the old Trailer was put to his wits' end. Had he only had solid ground, upon which to work, he would have found it but a moment's time to outwit

the cunning red-men and escape. But as it was, he was tied down to the island and surrounded on all sides by both water and red-skins. However, after a few moments' thought, a plan of escape—quite feasible with due patience and caution—was suggested to his inventive mind; and turning to his companions he said:

"I've got it now, boys, in a nut-shell."

"What? an Ingin?" gasped Josiah, with sudden emotion.

"No, you fool," responded the old Trailer, crustily. "A plan by which we can all escape, if you can hold yer tongue long enuff."

The probability of escape removed all fear from Josiah's mind, and in a very self-important tone he said:

"It's true, we've got to git out of this, but d— my cats if I don't hate to leave without leavin' half a dozen dead Ingins to rot on this island."

"Specks you would leab lots Ingings," Eygpt replied, "but ye'd jis' leave dem an' run for life, dat's how you leab dem."

"Oh, to thunder with your nonsense, 'Gyp'," said Josiah, nonchalantly, and then to Thornpath: "How do you intend to git away from here, Thede?"

"I'll 'lustrate, as the teacher said to the boy when he wanted him to learn the vintew of birch, if ye'll all lend a helping hand and gather some o' this brush."

Eager to know the Trailer's intention, his companions set to work, and in a few moments quite a pile of dry brush was gathered.

Taking up a small bunch of it, Thornpath twisted and matted it closely together, then dropped it in the water.

"Now, boys," he said, "git yer guns ready, for I'm goin' to send this brush adrift, and in course the Ingins will see it and think it some trickery, and 'll swim out to 'zamine it, then pepper it to 'em."

So saying, the hunter took up his long rifle, and placing the muzzle against the brush, pushed the floating pile out into the stream.

The moon was in the zenith, full and bright, and, as its light fell full upon the broad waters of the river it gave its surface the appearance of a sheet of molten silver. Every object upon it was plainly discernible for some distance from

the little island, and with eager eyes and motionless forms our four friends watched the bunch of brush float slowly down the river. As the old hunter had expected, or rather intended, a canoe with three Indians in it put out from the west shore and approached the brush. The hunters allowed them to reach it—turn it over and examine it thoroughly, then they brought their guns to bear upon them and fired. A death-shriek followed the report of the rifles, and a moment later, when the smoke from their guns had cleared away, the white men saw an empty canoe, three dead bodies, and the bunch of brush floating side by side down the silent current of the river.

A wild, triumphant laugh that rung out over the water and echoed and re-echoed through the valley, burst from Thornpath's lips, so shrill, so startling, that his companions started with an involuntary shudder.

Perhaps the savages shrunk back with terror when they heard that laugh, for time and again they had heard it to their sorrow. A fierce, revengeful yell was given back by the Sioux, telling how fearful would be the punishment of the pale-faces when they fell into their power, as they felt certain they would.

"Serpent Trail! Serpent Trail must die!" was echoed from a hundred savage throats on either side of the river.

Serpent Trail was a name given to Thornpath by the savages, from the fact of their inability ever to follow his trail; for, as well as being unequalled in trailing the Indians, the hunter was unequalled in hiding his own trail from the Indians.

"I tell ye, boys, the ruse works like a charm," said Thornpath; "reload yer guns, and we'll try 'em again."

Another bunch of brush was set adrift. Scarcely had it got seventy-five yards below the island, when our friends discovered several black objects moving toward it from either shore. These objects the hunters knew were the heads of Indians, who, with their bodies submerged, were swimming toward the brush; and waiting until they were all together, our friends fired. A death-yell and a terrible splashing in the water told how true again had been their aim.

Again brush was sent adrift, and this time but a single

age swam out to it, but the daring fellow paid for his rashness with his life. Egypt sent a bullet through his tufted skull, at a distance of twenty rods.

Several more bunches of brush were sent off, but not another savage ventured out. They seemed pretty well convinced that Serpent Trail was trying merely to draw them out to be shot, so they contented themselves by firing at the brush, but after a while this ceased also.

"Now, boys, our time has come," said the Trailer. "Every mother's son has got to escape by swimmin' down the river with a *bunch o' brush over his head*. If we're keerful and not make a noise in the water, the reds will never know there's a head hid in it. They will let 'em pass jist like they did 'em last ones we sent."

"It is a very daring undertaking, Thele, but I suppose it is our only course now," said young Harwood.

"Dis chile wouldn't min' de swim, but I hates erfally to wet my fiddle," remarked Egypt, regretfully.

"Confound your fiddle!" exclaimed Josiah; "if it had been in the bottom of the sea, and you with it, we would not be in this muss to-night."

"We've no time to parley now," said Thornpath. "I'll take the lead, and you three kin 'range 'mong yerselves who comes next."

So saying, the hunter took a large bunch of brush and placed it on the water. He next took his rifle and powder-horn and fastened them in among the tangled twigs where they would not get wet or be seen by the red-skins. Then, divesting himself of his superfluous clothing, he placed them away in a like manner, and announced his readiness to start.

"Now have yer guns ready, and if ye see any thing that looks like a Ingin come nigh me, blaze away. When I get below the bend in the river, I'll edge off slowly to 'eds the east shore, and when the rest o' ye comes, ye can do likewise, and I'll watch and meet ye at the bank. Now remember—the east side of the river, jist below the bend. Here goes."

The old Trailer waded into the channel till the water came up to his neck, then he carefully tucked the brush around his head and shoulders—allowing the brush to rest upon the water as well as upon his head.

All was now ready, and in a moment more the bunch of brush, propelled by the Trailer, moved out of the channel and floated slowly and silently down the river.

Those upon the island watched their friend's progress with almost breathless silence, and held their weapons ready for instant use.

Slowly on floated the brush, smoothly and easily, without a ripple or a sound to tell that a human being was beneath its cover.

Suddenly Egypt called the attention of his companions to a round black object that arose out of the water but a few feet from the brush. It was an easy matter to see that it was the head of an Indian, who had been swimming under the water in order to reach the brush without exposing himself to the fire of those upon the island. In an instant young Harwood leveled his rifle upon the object, but he did not fire. The savage had changed his position, so that the brush was brought directly in range.

"My God!" Harwood exclaimed, "our friend is lost!"

"Oh, salvation!" groaned Josiah.

"Look dar! look dar!" commanded Egypt, pointing excitedly toward the brush.

All did as commanded, and saw that the brush had ceased to move; then they saw the savage rise quickly out of the water to his waist, then quicker than a flash of electricity he disappeared beneath the water and was seen no more. For a moment there was an agitated motion of the brush, and then it moved on again as silently as before. Had one been enabled to have seen the water right where it stopped, they would have seen that it was stained with blood.

Without further molestation the brush passed around the bend of the river from the view of those upon the island. And then an attentive observer might have seen that it began to edge slowly off toward the east shore.

Ten minutes after the brush disappeared with Thorpath, a second bunch, with Frank Harwood propelling it, was passing down the stream. It rounded the bend without the least trouble from the red-skins, and then began to slide off toward the left. In a moment it touched the bank, and the young man made his appearance on shore. To his surprise, he felt

his hand seized in the tight grip of Thornpath, who said, in a low tone:

"All right, is't, Frank?"

"Yes," responded the latter; "but we were sure you had gone under."

"I tell ye I come mighty nigh it, boy, but I drag the red under the water, and shut off his wind in a jiffy. Yes, Frank, we're havin' a bloody time o' to-night."

A wild, triumphant yell greeted their ears, coming from the immediate vicinity of the island; and, alas! too well they knew that Egypt and Josiah had been surprised and taken prisoners, and no doubt killed and scalped upon the spot.

At this instant the old hunter made another discovery, that struck a chill through his companion's veins, and caused him to clutch the nearest limb for support.

"My God," he exclaimed, "all are lost!"

CHAPTER III.

AN ADVENTURE IN THE DARK.

FAR away toward the east a dull red light lit up the sky with a lurid glare, and it was this that so startled Frank Harwood, for it was in the immediate vicinity of the Post, the settlement where lived all that he held near and dear on earth.

Four days previous to the opening of our story, the hunters had left the settlement on a hunting-excursion up the river. At that time the Indians were at peace. But when they discovered the ominous light in the eastern sky, they knew what that meant; that the settlement had fallen—its people killed, and the buildings fired. This knowledge was indeed a blow to young Harwood, who, on his return to the Post, was to have been wedded to Mabel Prescott, one of earth's fairest and loveliest daughters.

"Perhaps," said Frank, hopefully, "it is not the Post on fire. It might be the prairie."

"Not the *peraroes*, my lad," replied the Hunter; "green grass won't burn, you know."

"It may be the old *fog*," as you old hunters call it—last year's grass that was not burnt off."

"Thar mought be sich a thing. Howsumever, we must tramp from this, as our first duty; we mought be needed. As ter Josiah and the darky, we'll look arter 'em when the weemin and children are seen to."

"Then, for Heaven's sake let's be off," said Harwood, seizing his rifle and bounding away.

With his eyes fixed upon the light before him, the young man pressed forward so fast that Thornpath could scarcely keep pace with him. Their course lay through a heavy forest, and as the moon by this time was below the tree-tops, it was so dark that they could scarcely see an arm's length before them. They were compelled to use great caution, for more than once their practiced ears caught the sound of soft, cat-like footsteps, which they knew was made by skulking red-skins, who, in all probability, were dogging their footsteps, watching for an opportunity to bury a tomahawk in their brain.

Our two friends at length came to the banks of a large creek known as the Black Channel, so called from the blackness of its waters and the gloomy forest through which it threaded its way. And, too, it resembled more an artificial watercourse than a natural creek, for its banks were high, even and perpendicular.

Swollen by a recent freshet, this stream proved to be a barrier to the progress of the two men. There were no means by which they could cross it without swimming. This they had about concluded to do, when suddenly there rose up around them a score of dusky forms, like evil spirits conjured up from the earth.

"Ingins, Frank!" exclaimed the old woodman; "run for yer life, boy!"

The Trailer turned, and, uttering a defiant yell, dashed through the circle of savages, knocking one of their number headlong to the earth, and made good his escape in the double gloom of the night and forest. Frank was less fortunate. In attempting to follow his companion's example, he stumbled over the savage that Thornpath had prostrated and was thrown

heavily to the ground. Before he could rise, a dozen of the Sioux were upon him, binding him hand and foot.

Thornpath knew by the yells of the red demons that Harwood was captured, and, dodging in his pursuit, he crawled back to within a few yards of where a score of them were standing over his young friend. He was sorely tempted to dash out and attempt his rescue, but upon reflection he saw that the odds were too powerful for him alone. However, he would wait and watch his chance to strike when the redskins were off their guard.

Being well versed in the Indian tongue, he soon learned the disposition that was to be made of his friend. While some of them were in favor of braining him on the spot, others and the majority were in favor of conveying him up the Black Channel and then given up to public torture; and, as the majority rules in all assemblies, so it did upon this occasion, and immediate preparations were made for departure.

The name of Black Channel sounded ominous enough in the old Trailer's ears, for some dark Indian legend was connected with it which tradition has failed to chronicle. But it had had been the custom, from time immemorial, that, when a captive was taken within a hundred miles of the channel, he was borne thither and conveyed up its course in a small canoe before being put to death.

With his hands and feet still bound, Frank was placed in a canoe upon the water. The old Trailer crawled down almost to the brink, and, by listening and watching, found how all had arranged themselves in the canoe. In the prow a single savage had seated himself, to act as pilot. Next to him was Frank; then his guard, a herculean-looking fellow, who sat with his tomahawk in one hand while the other rested upon the captive's shoulder. Next to the guard were the two oarsmen. Much to his delight, the old Trailer found that these four savages were all that were to be sent in charge of Frank, the others being sent away to continue the search for the Serpent Trail, who, at the very moment, was stationed within hearing of their plans.

In a few minutes the boat started on its laborious journey up the dark and gloomy channel, closely and silently followed by the shadowy form of the old Trailer, whose mind was now

busied with thoughts of how he should rescue his friend. Had they been anywhere else but on the water, he would not have hesitated a moment to have attacked the four savages. But one thing was certain: the number of savages in the canoe would not be diminished, and it might be increased, so he knew that now was the time to strike, if ever. But how should that strike be made? This was the question which agitated the Trailer's mind.

At length, however, an idea flashed across his mind, and at the time it was all he could do to restrain himself from bursting into a fit of laughter.

Bending low, the Trailer shot softly but swiftly past the canoe—on swiftly up the stream—on, until he came to where a little torrent came dashing down from the hills, and, plunging wildly and madly over a high, perpendicular rock, fell with a rush and a roar into the channel, and beat and churned its dark waters to a foam.

Here he halted and listened. The canoe was far behind.

"I've plenty time," he murmured to himself. "Oh, but I'll trick you, my beauties;" and again he had to bite his lips to refrain from laughing at the trick he was going to play on the savages.

The place chosen for his purpose was an admirable one. The trees stood thick and close to the bank, excluding every ray of light from the stream, while the rush and the roar of the little torrent drowned all other sounds.

Laying aside his rifle, Thornpath groped about in the dark until he found a small log. Taking it upon his shoulder he cautiously descended the bank of the creek, and wading into the water to his chin, he placed the log upon the water, just opposite the little cataract and between him and the approaching canoe. Placing his knife between his teeth and then firmly grasping the log, he awaited the approach of the canoe.

He had not long to wait. Soon he could distinguish the steady dip and swash of the paddles from the continuous roar of the cataract. And soon he could faintly discern the outlines of the canoe, and the savage seated in the prow, while his own form was hidden in the water and his head and the log blended with the dark waters so that it was im-

possible for the sharpest eye to detect his presence. Bracing himself for the ordeal, the old Trailer waited until the canoe was within a few feet of the log, then he thrust the heavy piece of wood forward, striking the prow of the canoe with such force that the savage on the watch was thrown forward headlong into the water. In an instant Thornpath had seized him, and that dreadful knife did its work, silently but with awful certainty, and the body floated away at the will of the current. All this had occurred in the space of a minute, the gloom hiding the actors and the current drowning the noise.

When the canoe came in contact with the log, the three savages burst into a roar of laughter at their comrade's misfortune in tumbling into the water—supposing, as they had come in contact with several others, but not so violent, that the log was merely driftwood floating down.

Thornpath gave a low, savage grunt of disapproval, and muttered some invective in the Indian tongue, then he *scrambled up and seated himself in the place of the canoe where the savage had sat!* And yet, the three savages were ignorant of the terrible and silent tragedy that had been enacted under the very prow of their canoe, so perfectly dense was the darkness, and so noisesome the little torrent.

All right again as the savages supposed, the canoe moved on once more, the darkness seeming to grow deeper and deeper as they advanced. The banks grew higher, and the low, drooping foliage of the trees trailed in the water, rendering the passage one of great difficulty—still the canoe labored on—slowly on.

Presently Harwood's guard opened a conversation with one of the oarsmen behind him. This gave Thornpath another opportunity to act. Leaning backward, he touched Frank's hand, and by its well-known clasp, Frank knew that *Sergeant Trail* sat there before him.

Harwood started with inward surprise, but, quicker than thought he realized his situation, and comprehended the danger that his friend was performing for his rescue.

The old Trailer had now but a few moments in which to finish up his work, for, just ahead, an opening in the forest appeared. At his feet lay the tomahawk of the first savage.

Taking it up, he rose to his feet and leaned over Harwood: then quicker than the lightning's flash leaves its home in the clouds, he brought it down upon the plumed head of the herculean Indian. Not a sigh escaped his lips, for his head was completely cloven to the neck, and he fell back against the oarsmen, his hot blood spurting up in their faces. The next instant the canoe glided out into the opening. It was like passing from a subterranean darkness into daylight. In an instant the savage oarsmen recognized the terrible Serpent Trail, towering aloft in the canoe with a tomahawk raised in the air. At the same instant, a wild, triumphant laugh burst from the old Trailer's lips. Horror-stricken with his mysterious presence in the canoe, the savages uttered a low cry of terror, and leaped from the canoe into the water, and, by diving, made good their escape to the forest.

Thornpath now severed young Harwood's bonds, which had become quite painful, saying, as he did so:

"Free ag'in, my boy; but I sw'ar I wouldn't 'a' give much for yer prospects once to-night. But then, you know, old Thornpath is never asleep, and I must admit, that this war the coolest trick I ever played on the reds. I war determined to win er lose, sink er swim."

"You are a noble fellow, Thornpath," replied Frank, chafing his cramped limbs, "and to you I owe my life."

"Thar, thar, boy; not another word o' *that*. I know all that you'd say. We're frien's and it's our duty to help one another without thanks er praise, jist the same as to help ours lves. Now let's be off for the Post—but stop. I've forgot my rifle."

The old Trailer took up one of the deserted paddles, and sent the canoe skimming back down the stream to the little cove where he had left his rifle. Having procured the weapon, the two crossed over the channel and took to the forest again.

Their course now lay over a more familiar country, consequently they were enabled to move forward with great ease and rapidity. The light before them grew red and redder as they advanced, and the air was becoming filled with smoke from burning wood. There was not a doubt now in the hunter's mind as to the direction of the Post. But, hoped that

they might be enabled to assist their friends, had they not all been massacred, they pressed on. They were nearing the outskirts of the woods, a few rods from which the Post was located when the old hunter came to an abrupt halt, and throwing up his hand significant of silence, he exclaimed in an undertone :

“ Hark ! didn't you hear a voice ? ”

CHAPTER IV.

TWO WOMEN.

THE Post was a small settlement situated on a lovely prairie, some thirty miles east of Fort Des Moines. It had formerly been a trading-post for the Indians, and the rendezvous of a number of hunters and trappers, and was surrounded by a strong stockade, in the center of which was built a commodious and substantial block house ; but as the Indians were then at peace, these defensive features became neglected and finally out of repair.

In the course of time, four families named Prescott, Venable, Stump and Eaton, came from the East, and, attracted by the fertility of the soil, settled down in the vicinity of the Post. The prosperity that follows in the wake of industry attended the settlers in their agricultural pursuits ; yet, unknown to themselves, their success was watched with a jealous eye by the dusky denizens of the forest, who came often to the settlement to barter their barbaric goods for corn, beer and meat.

Among the bright attractions of the Post, was Mahel Prescott, a maiden of some eighteen summers, with dark-brown eyes and chestnut ringlets. More than one savage eye had been upon her with the true Indian admiration, and more than one white hunter's heart had been led captive by her charms ; but there was one only with whose heart her own beat in unison, and that was Frank Harvard. Yet Mahel had a kind and gentle way of treating all friends, which many men

took for love. In fact, it was love, pure and honest love, but not that deep and holy passion, that binds two hearts in inseparable union—such love as existed between her and kind-hearted Frank Harwood.

Mabel presided over her father's house, for her mother had been dead several years, and these early responsibilities—including the care of a younger brother—had much to do in developing all those noble, womanly traits so far in advance of her years.

On the afternoon previous to the night on which our story opened, Mabel sat alone in her father's cabin. Her father, and all the men of the settlement, had gone away on a holiday hunting-excursion, and her little brother, Willie, of ten years, was out playing in the woods. The golden sunlight streaming through the vine-trellised windows, fell upon her face, which to-day seemed sad and thoughtful. She was not lonesome, for she could have sought the society of her neighbors had she been disposed, but some foreboding seemed to press upon her mind despite her efforts to the contrary.

"It is only one of my gloomy days," she said to herself, "and I will walk out, and perhaps the sunshine will dispel the gloominess from my spirits."

Donning her hat, she went out into the open air. She did not notice the direction she had taken, nor where she was, until she was half a mile from the cabins, out upon the green, flowery prairie. The wind was blowing softly from the south, laden with the perfume of wild-flowers, and turning about that it might fan her heated brow, the maiden found herself face to face with a young man who had stolen softly up behind her.

"Why! you here, Mr. Oakley?" she said, politely, but with some surprise depicted on her face.

"It is my extreme pleasure to be here at this moment, Mabel," he replied, with a smile, that was not altogether pleasing to the maiden.

"But I thought you went away with the men this morning?"

"So I did, Miss Prescott; but, unfortunately, or rather fortunately, I got separated from them in the woods, and not daring to pursue the hunt alone, I return to the Post."

"And why did you consider it *fortunate* to get lost from them?"

"Had it been otherwise, Mabel," he said, a little more sadly, "I would not have had the pleasure of this meeting and the chance of telling you again, that I still love you, and have come to renew my proposal for your hand."

The color flashed to Mabel's cheeks in an instant. An unusual light flashed in her dark-brown eyes. Her lips curled slightly, haughtily.

"Carl Oakley," she said, firmly, unflinchingly, "do you mean to insult me by repeating your proposals, when twice I told you I can not, *will* not be your wife? So long as you deserve my friendship I will be your friend, nothing more. I am sorry, but your ungallantry has provoked me to speak thus harshly."

"I am sorry, too, Mabel," he said, in a tone meant to be regretful, "but you know, men, in love-matters, are ungallant, exacting. But, another motive besides love prompted me to make this third proposal: the knowledge that you will need a strong arm to protect you from the dangers that the next hour will bring upon you."

"I do not understand you," she said, fixing her eyes upon him.

"To be more explicit, then, let me tell you that the terrible chief, Red Hand, has dug up the hatchet and declared a war of extermination upon the whites, and at this very moment, the chief, with a band of his followers, is coming down from the north like a whirlwind upon your settlement."

Something in the tone of the speaker Mabel could not fathom—something that made her heart beat violently. She mechanically turned her head as she spoke, and, to her horror, she descried a large number of horsemen far away on the northern horizon riding swiftly toward them. She knew that Oakley had spoken the truth. Turning to address him, she found to her surprise that he had gone, and was some distance away.

She stood like one in a maze, and watched him until he had disappeared in the timber; then she ran with all her might toward the cabins, taking a different route from that which she came. At a spring, a short distance from the cabins, she

met Miss Sarah Stump, a maiden lady of some thirty years, with small gray eyes, flaxen hair and a sharp, thin face, with a few premature wrinkles upon it. By the younger portion of the settlers, Miss Stump was known and liked as Aunt Sally, when she was in a good humor; but it was seldom that Miss Stump was ever so, for she was a sad victim to the toothache—that disease which Burns so aptly termed:

“The hell o’ all diseases.”

And no one ever saw woman, patient, suffering creatures, in a good-humor with the toothache, while, with a man, it is much worse.

But, Miss Sallie had committed one great, irretrievable error. While suffering with her teeth, she had taken to the use of opium as an alleviator of pain, and it had such an effect on her system, that she was compelled to use it constantly—in fact, it had become second nature to her, and to find her without a vial of the stimulant in her pocket, was to find her sick for the want of it. When Mabel met this spinster lady, she informed her at once of the approach of the Indians and the meeting with Carl Oakley.

Miss Stump elevated her hands and exclaimed:

“Oh, Lord, sakes! the Indians coming and the men all away! What under the sun and shining stars will we do? And that insignificant Carl Oakley! To *think* he would act that way when he *knows*, as well as I know, that you are going to marry Frank Harwood. Sakes alive! I just wish ‘Slick Jenkins was here, and I’d have him feller Carl and beat the very life outen him. I tell you what, Miss Mabel, there’s something wrong about that feller, now mind you.”

“I believe so myself, Aunt Sally, for when he spoke of the Indians coming, he acted so indifferently about it.”

“Ugh!”

“Gracious, what’s that, Mabel?”

It was a low, guttural sound that startled the spinster so, and turning, the two women found themselves confronted by two hideous painted savages.

An exclamation of horror escaped their lips, and they would have fled, but the savages, foreseeing their intention, advanced and seized them.

Mabel was too much frightened to make any resistance,

but Miss Stump fought her captor with the desperation of a mad woman.

"Let go of me, you blasted heathen!" she exclaimed indignantly, fiercely. "Let go, or I'll scratch your nasty eyes out, you great, dirty, vagabond! I'll give you to understand that Sarah Mariah Stump is no chicken-hearted girl; let go, I say!"

Although the indignant maid inflicted several painful scratches on the savage's face, and bit his hands until they bled, he did not seem inclined to give up his captive, and finally Miss Sarah Mariah Stump was compelled to succumb to superior strength.

"Very well, you greasy heathen!" she exclaimed, indignantly, "only your brute strength compels me to give up; but there's one thing certain, my tongue's free and I'll use it just as long as I've strength to move it, and I defy all creation to hinder me."

"Ugh!" exclaimed the savage. "White spaw rattle tongue heap much. Must hush—go with Indian."

"Not a step will I budge, you imp of Satan! I'll die first!"

"It is no use to be contrary, Aunt Sally," said Michel, somewhat recovering from her sudden fright, "we may as well go peaceably, for we will have to go anyhow."

"That's true, deary; but my teeth ache so that I scarcely know what I do or say. Yes, we may as well go along with these great, horrid owls and be done with it; but, oh, dear! *don't* I wish 'Siah Jenkins would happen along about now *My-me!* but I'll bet a pair of Indians would get their backs tanned."

Without further ceremony the women were led away, with sad and sorrowful hearts, for an endless and fearful captivity was before them.

By a circuitous route, they were taken a short way into the forest, when they halted beneath the arching branches of a mighty oak, to find themselves confronted by a tall and powerful Indian, whose gaudy head-dress, barbaric dress, glittering jewels and blood-stained hands, told, alas, too true, that he was the great and terrible chief, Red Hand—the scourge of the prairies.

At sight of him, Mabel grew almost sick at heart. She knew what a merciless wretch he was, and what was to be her fate.

Drawing himself up before the women, he gazed, first into the face of one, then the other, and in broken English said :

“ Much beautiful ! ”

Mabel started at the sound of his voice, but she allowed not her emotions to betray her surprise. She merely turned her face away with contempt, while Miss Stump, ever ready with her vocabulary of invectives, broke forth :

“ Yes, you great, dirty loafer ! I suppose *you* are at the head of all this meanness. I’d say ‘ beau-ti-ful,’ wouldn’t I ? ”

“ Does the white Squaw know she speaks to Red Hand, the great Sioux chief ? ”

“ Red Satan, you’d better say,” she sneered. “ Chief of a legion of imps.”

“ As the white squaw pleases ; but Red Hand has ponies here, and must take the *talk-squaw* and the lily to his lodge.”

“ Hamph ! I’ll make you think I’m a *talk-squaw* before you’re much older. But wouldn’t I be ashamed though, if I was you ? A great, dirty, nasty grease-spot of filth, carrying off two young helpless gals like us. Shame on your manhood, you red nigger ! ”

The chief smiled disdainfully, and turning, ordered the two savages to lead up five ponies that were browsing near.

The animals were led up, and, despite the humble petitions of poor Mabel Prescott, and the vindictive threats and desperate resistance of Miss Stump, they were placed upon the back of a pony each, and with Red Hand in the lead, and the two savages in the rear, they were carried away toward the north-west.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT WILLIE PRESCOTT SAW.

THORNPATH and Harwood stopped and listened in breathless silence.

"Is that you, Mr. Thornpath?"

It was a childish voice that thus greeted their ears, coming from the branches of the old oak overhead. Both the hunters recognized it as the voice of little Willie Prescott.

"Yes, Willie," replied the hunter; "it's I and Frank."

"Oh! I'm so glad!" exclaimed the little fellow, descending to the ground.

"What in the world are you doing here, Willie?" asked Frank.

"Why, I've been a-hiding from the Indians ever since they come to-day."

"What about the Indians, Willie? Tell us quickly about them," said Frank, impatiently, advancing and taking the child's hand in his.

"Well, this afternoon," the child began, "I was swinging out here in the woods, when I seen a little squirrel run in a hole up this big tree, and I climbed up in the tree to see if I couldn't get it for a pet: but, before I got up to the hole, I heard somebody speak, and looking down, I saw two Indians coming leading five ponies. I hid in the leaves so they could not see me, and watched them. They came and stood under the trees, and looked all around, and after awhile a white man came up and commenced talking something to them, and sent them away toward the Post, and—"

"Did you know who the white war, Willie?" asked Thornpath.

"Yes, sir. It was Mr. Oakley."

"Fien! and furries," exclaimed the old hunter. "Just as I've been tellin' ye for a long time, Frank. That white-livered cuss is in cahoots with the Sioux. But, go on, Willie, tell all you know and saw."

"Well, when the Indians went away, Oakley went to one of the ponies and took off a big bundle, and brought and hid it under a tree and opened it, and took out a whole lot of nice Indian clothes, and a little looking-glass. He then took off his own clothes and put on the Indian clothes, and I tell you they were nice! He had lots of shiny beads, and rings, and feathers. After he dressed up, he took something and made his face look jist like a Ingin's, and his hands he painted red as fire—"

"Holy wonders o' Jerusalem!" exclaimed the Trailer. "Red Hand, the Sioux chief! Worse than I expected; but, I'll go my right eye, boy, that I finger his skulp afore another week!"

"I never thought that Carl could be so ungodly as that," said Frank, "although I always knew there was something curious about his solitary hunting excursions, and disconnected stories about the Indians. But, go on, Willie."

"Well, after he had painted himself, he took the little looking-glass and looked at himself, and then laughed the loudest kind, and said:

"How are you, Mr. Red Hand? Quite a fine-looking Indian you are, sir. Ha! ha! ha! Carl Oakley, you're a brick, hard at that; but, all's fair in love or war, you know, old boy. I should think that Miss Mabel would be proud of such a fine-looking chief for a husband; at least, I think she will be! She will be hard to tame, no doubt; but, when I shake the scalp-locks of her lover, Frank Harwood, under her handsome nose, I think it will have quite a taming effect; at least, I shall try it."

"When he finished talking to himself," continued Willie, "he put away the glass and tied up the bundle of things, and put them back upon the pony, and then he began to walk backward and forward under the tree, stepping jist like granny Stump's old turkey does sometimes."

"After awhile the two Indians came back, and don't you think they were loading poor sister Mabel and Aunt Sally, and they put them on the ponies and took them away off."

And here little Willie ended the narrative, and began to cry. Frank drew him closer to him, and said, kindly:

"Don't cry, Willie; Thornpath and I will go and bring

Mabel and Aunt Sally back to-morrow. Come; can't you tell us what became of the other women and children?"

"No, sir," the child sobbed. "I never saw any of them after I left to swing; but I did see a whole lot of Indians running about the cabins like they were hunting for somebody."

"Spect they've all been killed," said the old hunter; "how-ever, we'd better go and look about the place for what information we can git. I'll go before, and you bring the boy and follow."

So saying, the three moved on toward the burning buildings. In a few moments they reached the outskirts of the woods. Before them lay the Post, a heap of glowing coals. Not a living creature was visible—not a sound broke the dead silence save the low wind that whispered continually to the forest-leaves, as though it was telling some deep and awful secret, such as had never been heard of before!

For a few moments the hunters and little Willie stopped and gazed around them, then they dropped upon their hands and knees and began crawling toward the burning cabins. They had gone but a short distance when they heard the snapping of a twig behind them. Looking back, they beheld, by the sickly glare of the fire, four pale, haggard faces, peering from the undergrowth toward them. They were the faces of Arthur Prescott, Aaron Eaton and Frederick Vaughn, who were just returning from their holiday excursion, to find their home in ruins and their families gone, alas, they knew not where.

Recognizing the settlers, the hunters arose and advanced toward them.

"Great God, Thornpath!" exclaimed Arthur Prescott, "what does this all mean?"

"Treachery! Injun deviltry, old friend," the old Trailer replied.

"Oh, it's my father?" exclaimed little Willie, running forward to meet his father.

"Thank God! my boy, my Willie, is safe!" the father cried, seizing his child in his arms, and pressing him to his breast fondly, joyfully.

In as few words as possible, Willie related all he knew

about the savages, their attack upon the settlement, and the captivity of Mabel and Miss Sarah Mariah Stump.

The settlers were deeply and sorrowfully affected by the supposed death of their friends, and it was several moments before they could decide what course to pursue. But finally they concluded to go and examine the burning remains of their houses, and see if they could find any traces of their friends' bodies in the still hissing, spattering flames.

In a few moments they were standing like grim specters around the ruins, shading their eyes with their hands, and gazing with ghastly features into the red, glowing coals. It was a sad, sorrowful sight to see those strong, brave men with tears glittering on their bronzed cheeks—moving about upon tiptoe, as if their footfalls would arouse some sleeping child; speaking in whispers, as though they were telling some terrible secret. But, thank Heaven, they found no charred bodies in the fire, but they shuddered when they thought of their being doomed to a worse fate.

"Perhaps they fled to *cache*," said young Harwood, the idea flashing suddenly in his mind.

"It may be possible," replied Mr. Eaton. "I had not thought of the *cache*."

"Nor I," chorused the others.

The *cache*, as it was called, was a large cavern that the hunters and settlers had dug in a hillside, just south of the cabins, for the purpose of storing away winter vegetables. From the cabins, it was reached through a lane of dense cottonwood bushes. Toward this cabin the settlers turned, and, upon reaching it, they found the door closed. Thornpath tried it, but found it was fastened inside.

A ray of hope now lit up the settlers' faces.

"Hilloo, in thar?" called Tobias Stump. "Jemima, are you there?"

"Who is that out there?" came a shrill but familiar voice from within the cave. All recognized the voice as that of old Mrs. Stump.

"It is me, Jemima—Tobias Stump," replied the old man. "Unlatch the door and come out."

In an instant the cave door flew open, and Mrs. Stump, followed by the rest of the women and children, emerged from

the cave and were clasped in the arms of their husbands and fathers. But two only were missing from the little band of pioneers—Mabel Prescott and Sarah Stump. All the rest were there.

"Oh, Tobias! Tobias!" groaned Mrs. Stump. "our poor dear child is carried away by the Indians—our poor Sarah, the joy and comfort of our old age. Poor Sam Jenkins! it will break his heart."

After the excitement of the meeting was over, the women told how they had escaped. Seeing the Indians coming, they all hurried down the cottonwood lake unobserved, and entered and barred the cave door before the savages reached the cabins. In their excitement the cave was not observed, and thereby the women and children miraculously escaped a terrible fate.

By this time the night was far advanced, and as nothing could be done toward following the trail of Red Hand and his captives, the pursuit was deferred till daylight.

Thornpath and his young companion, Frank Harwood, took upon themselves—refusing all other service—the perilous duty of rescuing the captives. To them the remainder of the night dragged wearily by, but, just as the last weary star of night paled away before the glare of the open day, Thede Thornpath and Frank were upon the trail.

CHAPTER VI.

A FOREST WEDDING.

LET us now go back and look after Josiah Jenkins and Egypt, for they are yet to play quite an important part in our story.

It had been arranged between Josiah and Egypt, that the former should follow Frank Harwood from the island, as soon as the signal was given by Frank of his escape. Every thing was soon made ready for their departure. Bread was gathered and their rifles secured therein, while Egypt had his fiddle

securely strapped upon his back. But, in the excitement of their preparation, the hunters failed to notice a long, black log floating down toward the island from above, behind which with their bodies hidden in the water, were a dozen or more red-skins.

Having watched until Harwood disappeared around the bend, they then prepared to follow; but, scarcely had Frank disappeared, when a deafening war-whoop sounded in their ears, and a dozen savages were upon them.

"Oh, salvation! save me, Egypt! save me!" cried Josiah, springing behind the daky.

"De good Lor! presarve us!" exclaimed the African, snatching his rifle from the prepared bundle of brush. "Now den, 'Siah, ye kin hab Deer Creek 'fair ober 'gin!"

But, the poor, cowardly Josiah was so paralyzed with fear that he could not move a muscle. Not so with Egypt. Clubbing his rifle, he swung it right and left with such a vim, that, had Josiah aided him the least bit, they would have driven the red-skins from the island. As it was, the brave black was finally overpowered and bound hand and foot, as was Josiah, also.

The savages now searched the island over and over for the terrible Serpent Trail, but finding him not, they took their prisoners and conveyed them over to the east shore in the identical canoe belonging to the hunters. Here were a number of ponies, and, mounting the prisoners on a couple, whose owners Egypt had slain upon the island, they headed away toward the north-east.

The Sioux were not slow in observing that Josiah was an unmitigated coward, and, of course, they foresaw considerable savage sport in him; for above all things the American Indian loves to torture a cowardly captive. Knowing that he would not attempt escape, they allowed him the freedom of his hands, but the Thunder-cloud, as they called the African on account of his sable complexion, was bound, not only hand and foot, but firmly lashed to the animal's back he rode.

After an hour or two riding the cavalcade entered a broad scope of timber, and but a short distance ahead they saw a camp fire burning, and several dusky forms moving about it.

At sight of it, the captors gave a yell which was answered back in a similar tone by those at the camp-fire, and then the prisoners knew that another party of red-skins were encamped there.

In a few moments the cavalcade reached the camp and were met by a crowd of hooting, jeering savages, not only men, but a number of squaws and papooses.

The captives were taken from the ponies and tied to a large tree near the fire; and after some Indian consultation, they were informed by a half-breed, whom they had often seen at the Post, that they were to be burned at the stake, as soon as some preliminary arrangements could be made.

Of course, the horrible news set Josiah about crazy, and he at once tried every way to purchase his freedom, even promising to take up arms against his own people. The half-breed, who was known as Tongah, and who spoke the English language with considerable fluency, knew that Josiah was not a dangerous enemy, and might prove a valuable accessory to their power, and looked upon his promise with quite a favorable opinion, for he knew that the white man was too great a coward ever to attempt to break his promise; so he at once opened a negotiation with him.

"If the red-man will take the pale-face into his lodge and call him brother, will he ever try to escape?" Tongah asked.

Josiah's face brightened up. A ray of hope gleamed in his eyes, as he replied:

"Jist you try me, good Mr. Tongah, and if ever I break my promise, you may break my neck; and perhaps my friend Egypt here will turn Ingin, too, for the sake of his life?"

"Git out?" exclaimed Egypt, indignantly. "Dis cawn't I roast a million years afore he turn Ingin—better turn Ingin at once. No, sah, dis ninger gwine to be trad to de death."

"Oh, fiddlesticks! Gyp; life's more precious than any thing else—"

"Yes, to de coward," said the dinky.

"Well, well, if there is no reason about you, you'll have to take the consequence, that's all there is about it."

"I's ready for de quencyency, but not to turn traitor."

"Very well, Egypt; but I'm sorry your rich a fool," then

turning to Tongah he continued : " And now, Mr. Tongah, if you consider it a bargain, s'pose you let me loose."

" Not yet," replied the half-breed ; " mus' promise more ; mus' promise to dress like Ingin."

" I promise," said Josiah, without hesitation.

" Mus' promise pull out whiskers like Ingin."

Oh, say,— ye, sir, I promise," and Josiah fairly winced at the thought of such an ordeal, of pulling out his whiskers—the pride of his manhood.

" And mus' promise to eat hair like Ingin," continued Tongah.

" I promise," quick and prompt.

" And paint like Ingin."

" I promise."

" And marry squaw."

" I—I—I," said Josiah, hesitatingly, as his thoughts recurred to his betrothed, Miss Sarah Mariah Stump, but seeing no chance, he continued : " I prom—ise."

" Yah ! yah ! yah !" roared Egypt, despite his situation. " If dat don't beat enny barging dis chile ebber hearn ov ! Golly, Mister Josiah Inging, guess dis nigger 'scape and go back to de Post and marry Missis Sarah Mati', if you's gwine to play false *dat* way."

Josiah's bonds were cut, and he was allowed to mingle with the savages quite freely. After awhile, however, Tongah came to him, and said :

" Pal-face make good Ingin. Fear run off ; mus' marry now."

" All right," responded Josiah, quite pleased with the turn of affairs, " bring on your gal ; the poortiest you've got ; let's have a young princess."

" Well, then," said Tongah, turning away, with a smile of satisfaction upon his dusky features. While he was gone, Josiah turned to Egypt, and said :

" You see, Gyp, how easy you could purchase your liberty if you wasn't so darned headstrong, and mebbe git to be a big chief. I'll bet a coon-skin, that I'm a chief or prophet before a month ; and, besides, I'll bet I'm to marry that beautiful young princess over there, with the glitterin' beads and ~~Indian~~ jewels. Jist look ; ain't she a beauty ?"

"Dis chile 'd rather skulp her den marry her," said Egypt, disgusted with the talk and cowardly actions of his white friend. "What Sally Mari' think, when she hear ob your turning Inging?"

"Why, she'll think that I had sense enough to purchase my life from an awful death, and if I live to marry that beautiful young princess, of course I'll get to be a chief, and then I'll see that no danger ever heads the Post or its settlers."

At this juncture, Tongah returned, leading an old, decrepit hag of a squaw, that, with her long lantern jaws, her wolfish mouth, from which protruded two long, yellow teeth—her small, black, serpent-like eyes, and her long, bony arms and skeleton-like fingers, made her appear the demon of *littleness*—the mother of Satan.

"Oh, salvation!" involuntarily exclaimed Josiah, at sight of the old hag.

Stopping in front of him, the half-breed said:

"Tongah has picked a wife for the pale-face."

Egypt burst into a roar of laughter, while Josiah sank back as from a serpent.

"Great porcupines!" he exclaimed, "you don't mean that old wretch?"

"Yes," replied Tongah. "The Raven is the mother of a great chief; she has seen many moons wax and wane; her head is old and gray, but her spirit is young. She has trained many a young warrior to bend the bow and wield the tomahawk, and she can train her young pale-face husband. Does the pale-face say yes, or no?"

"I—I—I," stammered the doomed Josiah, glancing shamefully about him. "Can't I pick my own wife?"

"Must marry the Raven, or die," said the half-breed, clutching at his side, tomahawk.

Josiah could stand any thing better than the thoughts of being killed, and, as there was no alternative, he was compelled to signify his willingness to marry the old Raven; and, according to the Indians' rite, the ceremony was performed.

"Yah! yah! yah!" roared the fearless Egypt. "Happy chile you is, 'Siah Jenkins, wid yer young wife. If you don't get de nice young princess wid de shining beads and de

glittering jewels, ye got her grandmother — all de same. Yah! yah! yah!”

Poor Josiah! he was so mortified that he could not utter a word, but he looked as though he didn't care how soon Egypt was put out of sight. Being fully initiated as an Indian, he was allowed to mingle with the red-skins at will, though he aimed to keep his distance from the darky and the old Raven. Now and then he would look away into the woods, as though he had half a notion to break his promise and desert his Indian wife, by taking to his heels into the forest; but no such chance was offered, for he was watched too close.

Josiah being disposed of, the savages now turned their attention to Egypt, and soon caught sight of his fiddle. This they removed from his back and took from the green-baize bag. In examining it, they touched one of the strings, which produced a like like sound, and increased their curiosity to the highest degree.

Josiah Jenkins came forward and attempted to explain its use, but making a complete failure in that, he gave the savages to understand that it was a great singer, and that none but the Thunder-cloud could make it sing. He then insisted on the savages' releasing the darky's hands, so that he could make it chant his own death-song, and learn them how to make it sing. With some reluctance, bordering on superstition, the savages finally released the negro's hands, and handed him the fiddle.

Egypt tuned the instrument with as much *sang froid* as though he had been in a ball-room “away down in Dixie,” and then, taking the bow, struck up quite a lively air.

At this juncture Josiah fell back, while the savages, filled with the most profound curiosity, gathered about the musician, and listened to the music with speechless wonder. Suddenly, however, a wild yell burst from their lips, and turned them away like so many frightened deer. Egypt ceased playing to ascertain the cause of the sudden commotion, when, to his immense surprise and delight, he saw Josiah Jenkins disappear in the gloom of the forest with the speed of a deer, closely pursued by every savage warrior.

Now was the darky's time, and well he knew it; so, thrusting his hand in the bosom of his hunting-shirt, he drew

forth a small knife that had escaped the savages' notice, and severed the cords that bound his lower limbs ; then, replacing the knife, he sprung to his feet, and seizing his own trusty rifle from among those of the savages, he darted away into the gloom of the woods.

Josiah Jenkins made good use of his legs, for he knew now that it was a case of life or death. He was naturally a swift runner, and upon this occasion fear seemed to lend wings to his feet, and it was but a little while until he had put a safe distance between himself and the red-skins whom he had completely outwitted, whether intentionally or accidentally, is a question of much doubt. Out of breath, Josiah stopped to rest and listen. Far away in the distance he could hear the faint yells of the baffled Sioux ; and hark ! near him he heard the light patter, patter of soft footfalls. He peered about in the gloom, and but a few steps away he discovered a pair of small, bead-like sparks of fire, back of which he could discern a dark, shaggy form. What was it ? While the fugitive sat trying to answer himself the question, a low, sharp bark broke the awful silence. It was a wolf !

Springing to his feet, Josiah dashed away. Another sharp bark echoed through the woods, and was answered back from a dozen different points. Soon that ominous patter, patter fell upon the fugitive's ear again, and then he knew that he was being pursued—not only by one but a dozen wolves. It was a situation to appal the stoutest heart. All around him the fugitive could see those bead-like sparks floating—he could hear the snapping and snarling of the hungry beasts ; and almost feel their hot breath in his face ; every moment their number increased ; every step they came closer and closer, until the fugitive seemed surrounded by a sea of shaggy forms and glaring eyes.

Suddenly Josiah struck his foot upon a log and fell to the earth, and in attempting to rise he found that he had pitched, half the length of his body, into an immense hollow log. The wolves were at his heels, and there was no chance of escape or retreat, so he pressed himself further into the log, and succeeded, by furious kicking, in beating the howling beasts back and saving himself from a terrible fate.

For several moments the wolves fought and howled around

the log, now gnawing and scratching at the sides, in all making such a fearful din that the cold perspiration oozed from every pore in the fugitive's body. But, finally, the noise subsided, and one by one the beasts shrank away to their lairs, and all became silent as the grave.

Overcome by sheer exhaustion, Josiah Jenkins soon fell into a refreshing sleep, from which he was finally aroused by the sound of human voices.

Raising himself onto his elbows, and rubbing his eyes to collect his bewildered senses, he found that a small, dazzling ray of light was shining in the log through a small knot-hole. Through this hole he peered out, and to his horror he saw that a bright camp-fire was burning within a few feet of the log, while around it were seated half a dozen grim and stalwart savages, among whom was the great chief, Red Hand. Presently, his eye caught sight of other forms and faces that caused an involuntary sigh to escape his lips, accompanied by that familiar exclamation, "Oh, salvation!"

CHAPTER VII.

RED HAND AND HIS WARRIORS TAKE A NAP.

In carrying his captives away, Red Hand took no precaution whatever to hide his trail. He felt so positive that his plans had been so well laid and executed that there would be no one, in fact, to follow his trail left alive after that day's bloody work, for he had distributed all his forces so as to kill and capture all the male settlers and hunters belonging to the Post, little dreaming how imperfectly his object would be accomplished.

When night came on, it found the chief and his captives several miles from the Post, and just entering a broad prairie, where he halted for a few moments to allow the ponies to graze. In the mean time he was joined by a party of four other savages, each of whom was leading a pack-animal loaded with all kinds of plunder taken from the Post.

In a few moments the cavalcade, now numbering nine persons including the captives, resumed their journey northward toward the Indian village. The savages rode in single file, Red Hand in advance, but the captives were compelled to ride at one side, so that their animals could be led.

The moon soon came up and threw a pale and ghostly light over the beautiful landscape, and the soft south wind drifted calmly over the dark-green expanse, fanning the tall prairie grass into gentle billows upon which rode myriads of sweet-scented wild flowers. Now and then a prairie-hen or a plover would go whirring up from its grassy roost into the air, and now a deer or a wolf would go bounding away over the plain so swift, so graceful, that they seemed floating on the wind. But the captives saw none of these sights; their minds, their hearts were too deeply afflicted with thoughts of the terrible fate to which they were being taken.

Neither of the captives nor captors spoke as they rode on, on. Every sound grated on the captives' ears, hollow, sepulchral. Even the tramp, tramp of their animals' feet sounded ghostly, and the grim, dusky riders at their side threw an additional shadow across their gloomy and dejected spirits.

Poor Mabel! she wept till her eyes were sore, and Miss Stump scolded and poured out her invectives upon the savages until her vocabulary was exhausted, and herself, also; but the red-skins, heeding not their sorrow, rode on and on, deeper and deeper into the solitude of the great plain. Presently, however, a dark belt of timber rose up before them against the northern sky, black and grim. Red Hand now turned to the captives, and said:

"When we reach the grove we will halt for the night and rest."

"Who cares *what* you do, you great horrid creatures, yes," was Miss Stump's rejoinder.

Nothing more was said, for the chief seemed to know that Miss Sally would have the last word in spite of him.

The grove was reached; and continuing on a short distance beneath its gloomy arches, they finally came to a halt.

Dismounting, the ponies were unled and turned loose to browse. A fire was now struck, and a tent, made of poles and Indian blankets, immediately constructed for the accom-

modation of the captives ; and when they were placed in it, a guard was stationed on the outside.

The plunder obtained at the Post was now brought near the fire and overhauled by Red Hand. There were quilts, blankets and bedding of all kinds ; male and female garments, dishes, pots and all kinds of cooking utensils, and a large quantity of flour and meat. The chief seemed greatly pleased with the haul his savages had made, and applauded them in terms of the warmest kind.

When the captives were alone in the tent, Mabel asked :

" Aunt Sally, what do you think is to become of us ? "

" The Lord only knows, Mabel ; but there is one thing, unless I'm treated like a lady, I'll relieve myself by swallowing the contents of *that*," and the spinster drew from her bosom and held up before Mabel a small vial filled with opium.

" Oh, Aunt Sally ! could you do such a dreadful thing as that ? It would be wicked—be suicide."

" Better that than to be tortured to death by both the tooth-ache and the Ingins."

" I know death would be much more preferable than captivity among the Indians. But, aunty, there is one thing I have wanted to ask you, and that is, if you know that that chief, Red Hand, is none other than Carl Oakley ? "

" I don't, I do, Mabel, and did from the minute I first saw him ; but I didn't want to let on, and I thought I'd keep it from you for fear you'd take on so about it."

" And I thought the same by you, aunty ; besides, I did not want the villain to know that I knew him and was in his power. I see now that father's prediction is true—that Carl was in some manner in league with the Indians, though he never dreamed of his being the chief, Red Hand, as he undoubtedly is."

" Well, deary, there is one thing—" began Miss Stamp. But she didn't finish, for at this moment the door to the tent was raised and Red Hand entered, and, facing the spinster, said :

" My knives are hungry, and the pale-face squaw knows how to cook, for Red Hand has been to the Post in disguise, and eaten at the table of the pale-face. There is meat and

flour plenty, and the white squaw must make supper for my braves."

"You've—been—to—the Post—in disguise!" sneered the irate Miss Sally. "Do you suppose, you mean, low-life'd, blue-eyed, dirty-faced traitor, that we don't know you, Carl Oakley?"

The chief shrunk back as though a dagger had been thrust at him, and before he could gain breath to speak, the spinner continued:

"You needn't shrink back, you vile beast; and if you'll wash the nastiness off yer face, yer snake-like, kill-sleep countenance will show plain enough that Carl Oakley and the blood-stained wretch Red Hand are one."

There was no denying the truth so pointedly told, and, in the familiar tone of Carl Oakley—for he it indeed was—the chief replied:

"Really, Miss Stump, I thought my disguise was complete, but I had forgotten that woman's eyes are sharp, and can look deep into turbid water. However, I don't know as it matters whether you know that I am Carl Oakley or not; but, be that as it may, you know that I am Red Hand, also; and I calculate, Miss Mabel, to make you Mrs. Red Hand for your insolence to-day. It ~~was~~ in your power once to have saved the Post and much bloodshed; now you are powerless in every respect. My warriors were at hand, and I had it so arranged, that, in case you rejected my suit, I would force you to be mine, and destroy the Post and its settlers so that you would have no one to look to for help."

"Inhuman devil!" exclaimed Miss Stump. "How snake-ingly has your cloven foot been hidden?"

"There is but one thing I have to say you, Miss Stump, and that is, yours will be a cloven head unless you make up your mind within the next ten minutes to prepare us a supper of that excellent soup of which I know you to be good at making. Now mind, *ten minutes*," and the chief turned and left the tent.

"Dear, dear, Mabel! what will I do? I know the low-life'd scape-gallows is in earnest," said the spinner, somewhat frightened.

"I tell you, Aunt Sally, you had better go out and make

the soup for them. It might be that they all *have the toothache, ainty.*"

"True enough!" exclaimed the spinster, elevating her hands. "I had not thought of *that* once. You're a dear, darling Mabel, I must say. Won't I fix them, though?"

"Yes; but you must be careful, Aunt Sally, and not give them too much of the narcotic. I would as willingly be murdered myself as to know that I was a murderess."

"No danger of that, Mabel; there's jist about enough in the vial to put them all to sleep right easily. I tell you what, I haven't used opium these ten years and not know what it is, and what it will do—no, no, Mabel, jist enough in that vial to put them all to sleep—not kill them, child, for I wouldn't be guilty of such a crime—no; I'd have my head split first, though I don't believe the good Lord would consider it murder to kill sich wretches—children of Satan! But I do hate to waste my tooth-medicine, for fear I take one of them reg'lar neuralgic toothaches before I can get more, but I believe I can stand the pain better than the presence of that great horrid heathen, Oakley, and his low—"

"You coming or not?"

It was Carl Oakley, or Red Hand as we will continue to call him, that appeared at the tent door with a tomahawk in his hand—a defiant look upon his bearded features.

"Well, I reckon if I must, I must," said the spinster, "but I hate most awfully to cook for sich a dog as you are."

"It's well that you have come to terms," said the chief, turning away from the door.

"And I'm thinking you'll come to terms before one hour if I mistake not," Miss Stump said, in an undertone, as she rose and followed the renegade from the tent.

The spinster really recognized many things scattered about the tent which had been taken from her father's home; but, pretending not to recognize them, she set to work making the soup. Red Hand stood near the tent, while the six savages seated themselves on the very log in which Josiah Jenkins lay curled up long and hard, and watched the white squaw with much savage curiosity.

In a few minutes the spinster had one of the kettles, stolen from the Post, hanging over the fire, filled with the hissing,

sputtering soup which sent out a luscious odor, causing the hungry and impatient savages to smack their lips with infinite gusto.

After the soup was done, Miss Stump set it off the fire to cool—taking good care to set it in the shadow of a small bush near by—while she set about gathering a sufficient number of dishes and spoons for the party. She found no difficulty in finding the desired number, for the pantries and cupboards of the settlement had been thoroughly ransacked by the red-skins.

Interposing herself between the savages and the kettle, Miss Stump began dishing out the soup. She had filled two dishes and set them aside, and then by a dexterous flip of the hand, peculiar to the cook when she has burnt her finger, produced her opium vial, and, unobserved, emptied its contents into the kettle. Giving it a vigorous stir, she dished the remaining seven dishes and handed them around to the savages, taking good care to give Red Hand the largest. This the chief at once noticed and remarked:

“You favor me, Miss Stump, by giving me the largest dish.”

“Daddy always gives the biggest hog the most swill,” was the indignant cook’s reply, and taking the two undressed dishes of soup, entered the tent.

“Here, deary,” she said to Mabel, “I saved our two good dishes of the soup for us.”

“How thoughtful you are, Aunt Sally. If the charm works, the soup will give us strength to escape.”

The captives ate their supper in silence. Their hearts were too full of hopeful anxiety for conversation. Ten minutes went by, losing themselves forever in the great time of the past. A quarter of an hour had passed, when Red Hand came and peered into the tent, and, finding all right, went back to the camp-fire. Then seating himself, he took out his pipe, loaded and lit it and commenced smoking. The savages having finished their soup, placed the dishes carefully upon the ground, and seating themselves around the fire, commenced smoking also.

A quietude, ghost-like in its silence, now reigned, broken only by the piping of a cricket in the big halloo by hard by.

and the puff, puff of the savages emitting smoke from their mouths and nostrils.

Miss Stump tore a small hole in the tent so that she could watch the movement of the savages. Soon one of them arose, or rather staggered to his feet, and having stretched himself and yawned drowsily, he articulated the words, "heap sleepy," and sought a comfortable spot near at hand, where stretching himself out he soon was oblivious to all earthly things.

"Salvation, oh, the joyful sound!" exclaimed Miss Sally, turning to Mabel. "The charm works! the charm works, deary! one of the Ingins has laid himself out—and, as I'm born to die, there goes another. Te-he! he!" the spinster laughed in a suppressed giggle. "I'm thinking that gallant band is coming to terms—there! another's goin' to bed. Three of the seven—*four* of the seven, are done for. And that least Oakley's 'bout gone; his pipe has dropped out of his mouth, and his—there goes another Ingin—jaw han's like the lip of a motherless colt—there! *he* is gone! But one Ingin's left, and there! I'll be snatched if he isn't pinned! Oh, Mabel! we're free! free!"

True enough, the last red-skin had fallen into a profound sleep from the effects of the narcotic, and Mabel and Sally were free.

"We have no time to lose, Aunt Sally," said Mabel, "for there is no telling what time they may awaken. Had we each better take a pony?"

"No, Mabel, we'd better go afoot. We can go faster than them half-starved and jaded animals."

"Then let us hide the Indians' weapons and be off."

"Very well, deary; very well."

So saying, the two emerged from the tent, and gathering up the savages' rifles, tomahawks and knives, concealed them in a clump of bushes that stood hard by.

"There, now let us be off," said Miss Stump.

"Oh, salvation!" exclaimed an unknown voice.

It was a deep, sepulchral voice that fell upon the fugitives' ears as they turned to flee—a voice that seemed to issue from the earth at their feet. Frightened, almost out of their senses, the women, hand in hand fled away into the deep

shadows of the woods. After they had run some distance Miss Stump asked:

"You heard that awful groan, did you, Mabel?"

"Yes; it almost chilled the blood in my veins. What do suppose it was?"

"The Lord only knows; it seemed to come from the earth."

"To me, aunty, it seemed to come from that big log lying near the camp-fire."

Without further conversation, the two fugitives moved on through the dark woods, their course being guided by a dull, red light far away before them, which Mabel had noticed was brighter and directly behind them when they entered the timber with Red Hand. Alas! they little dreamed that it was a light made by their burning homes.

The fugitives, moving as swiftly on as the rough condition of their way would permit, had nearly reached the outskirts of the timber when they detected a low, shuffling tread behind them. Crouching down in the undergrowth they listened. Nearer and plainer than before, they could hear that shuffling, shuffling gait. Then, through the almost inky darkness they discovered two glowing orbs of fire, back of which they could faintly discern a great, black, shaggy mass. The hearts of the fugitives seemed to cease beating—their blood ran cold.

"My God! Aunt Sally, what is it?" gasped Mabel.

A low, fierce growl was the only response. It was a bear. With a wild scream the fugitives arose and fled, the brute lumbering on in pursuit.

In their wild excitement, Mabel had become separated from her companion, but she was so terribly frightened that she did not notice the fact, until she had gone a long way. Then she stopped, with another terror upon her heart and mind, and listened. But, all was silent as the grave, save that deep and solemn sound of nature that is always heard in the gloomy wilderness after nightfall. Had the bear overtaken Sally? The thought was horrifying.

Mabel called aloud the name of her companion, but only the echo of her own voice was borne back to her ears in a sad, sad refrain.

Wringing her hands in an agony of despair, the maiden moved on—where she knew not, her mind was so confused but, at last, overcome with sheer exhaustion, she sunk down at the foot of a tree and fell into a refreshing slumber.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE BLACK SWAMP.

THEDE THORNPATH was in all his element when upon the trail, and when he and Frank Harwood took up that of Red Hand, he seemed to glide along as if impelled by some secret power, so easy and swiftly did he move. Where Frank could see no sign of a footprint, the old Trailer would make some remark about its plainness and the carelessness of the savages in leaving it so. His knowledge of the trail was a practical knowledge, gained by long experience and the very closest observation. He could tell where a leaf or a twig, lying upon the ground amid myriads of others, had been displaced by another agency than that of the wind, and he could easily tell by what that leaf or twig had been disturbed, whether by beast, bird or human. In fact it often had been remarked by his fellow-hunters, that, when no "signs" were visible by which to trail an Indian, Thornpath could follow him by scent!

Frank found it difficult to keep pace with the veteran Trailer upon this occasion, when, upon other occasions, the young hunter had flattered himself that he could distance this man of the wilderness two to one; but now he had reason to change his mind.

As they neared the great prairie before them, Thornpath suddenly came to a halt, and, with a perplexed look upon his face, said:

"I tell you, boy, we're going to hev some trubble, fast thing you know."

"What with, Thede?" asked Frank.

"The red-skins."

"Why, we're having that already."

"Yes, but I mean afore we get out, or very far from this 'ere timber."

"What makes you think so?"

"Looke," said the Trailer, pointing to the ground, "do you see that?"

Frank looked as directed, but saw nothing, and informed the old Trailer so.

"Wal, really!" exclaimed Thornpath, "thar's a fresh In-gin trail plain as the nose onter my face, and you know that's purty plain."

"I see nothing—not the least sign of a trail," said Frank.

"Wal, I'll show you. You see this 'ere leaf, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Wal, you see the *upper* side is *dry*, while the lower or under-side is damp with dew. Now, as the dew allers kalls onter the top side o' things, it's purty evident that this leaf's been turned over quite lately; and if ye'd jist stand where the 'lection o' the sun's rays fall right, ye kin see whar the moccasins o' at least half a dozen red-skins hev sopped the mud time on them t'other leaves. Thet's how I trail red-skins, my boy, thet's how."

As the hunter concluded, he moved on, keeping a wary watch on all sides. In a few minutes they emerged into the great prairie that stretched its unbroken length away northward for miles and miles.

Here the old hunter halted, and having examined the ground for a moment, said:

"I tell you, Frank, this 'ere trail win's effer 'round the big Black Swamp, and I think we'd better take ~~through~~ the swamp, and save at least three miles. Of course, Red Hand hez gone to his village; so we'll strike the trail jist t'other side the swamp."

"But, can we cross the Black Swamp?" asked Frank.

"Cross it? Like a duck, for thar's nary drop o' water in the whole swamp."

"Then let us not tarry here," said Frank, impatiently.

The two at once struck across the prairie, toward the Black Swamp, which was about two miles away. This swamp was a low, marshy region about two miles long and one broad. It was thickly covered with buffalo, or sough grass,

as high as a man's shoulders, and now and then a patch of flags that reared their spear-like blades high above the grass. During the wet season this swamp contained much water, which, running in from the prairies, washed the black ashes of the lately burned prairie-grass with it and colored it to a jet-black; hence the name, Black Swamp.

Moving briskly on, our two friends had nearly gained the edge of the dry morass, when they were suddenly startled by a fierce, savage yell, accompanied by the report of rifles and the whizzing of bullets, one of which wounded Frank in his arm quite painfully.

Turning about they discovered nine savages running toward them with uplifted tomahawks. They were not more than fifty yards away, and our friends had but little time to act. But, quick as thought they raised their rifles and shot down two of them, then turned and dashed into the grass jungle, closely followed by the remaining seven infuriated Sioux. By crouching down the whites could not be seen by the red-skins, and yet the latter could follow them by the agitated motion of the tall buffalo-grass, but our friends momentarily widened the distance between them; and finally, when they had gone some distance they stopped. Thornpath now raised his head above the sea of green and found that the Indians had stopped, also; but before he could dodge down again, a bullet grazed the top of his head, cutting away a lock of hair.

"Holy water o' Jerusalem!" exclaimed the old Trailer, rubbing his head furiously; "that's what I call close cuttin'. Frank, my boy, we're in about the latitude to git our ha'r lifted; and if I'm not mistaken, thar's a-goin' to be some tall work in this 'ere swamp. Let's see; seven red skins ag'in'st us two—whew!"

The old Trailer now examined Frank's wounded arm; and though no bones were broken, he found a very ugly flesh-wound between the elbow and wrist, though it was not painful. Carefully bandaging it with his handkerchief, the old Trailer concluded to see what the red-skins were doing. So, covering his cap on his rifle, as a target to draw the Sioux fire, he soon learned where they were, for half a dozen bullets whistled by in an instant.

"See here, my red beauties," he exclaimed, somewhat nettled, "that's a game two kin play at." He rose slowly up out of the tall grass, but he saw no red-skins, although he could see the tall grass moving where they stood, evidently loading their rifles. Thornpath stood motionless, with his rifle still leveled, waiting for the sight of a red-skin, for he knew that he now had the advantage. He had not long to wait. Presently he discovered a tuft of hair, then the head of a savage appear above the grass very slowly. It was enough. A quick aim, and the rifle cracked. The red-skin leaped half his length above the top of the grass, uttered a yell, and fell dead at the feet of his companions.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the old Trailer, "I jerked that red child o' the old primeval forest outen his moccasins in a jiffy, so now we've but six to trouble us."

"Suppose I try one, now," said Frank.

"Better not, boy; they've got the advantage now, jist as I had it by gittin' my head up afore they did. Jist hold on and I'll fix 'em; a new idee's slipped into my head."

At every few steps throughout the swamp were small mounds or hummocks thickly covered with grass which had grown some six to ten inches taller than the main body of grass. These tussocks were from six to twenty inches in diameter, and were quite dense and of a darker color than the rest of the grass, owing to their having growing more rank.

Taking out his scalping-knife he crawled to a mound and cut the grass all carefully off. Then, with Frank's assistance, he had the grass arranged carefully in an upright position around his head and confined there by means of a buck-skin string. No one, not seeing the hunter's body, could have told but what the grass around his head was a natural tussock.

"Now, I'll try the varmints ag'in," the Trailer said; "you load the guns, Frank, and I'll do the shootin'."

Placing his hands upon his knees to brace himself, the old hunter began to raise himself up so slowly and easily that Frank could scarcely see him move. It was ten minutes before he had fully straightened himself up, and, when he did, he discovered, through a small opening in the grass, five of the savages looking directly toward him; but, as there was

no difference between the grass about his head and the other tussocks that were quite numerous in the immediate vicinity, the red-skins did not notice that a *new* tussock had sprung up into view. Even if they did, they had not the least suspicion of their dreaded enemy's head being snugly enconcealed therein.

"Well, how does it work?" asked Frank, when the hunter had straightened himself up.

"Like a charm, like a charm, my boy; but, I'll bet thar's some trick up with the Ingins. Thar's six o' 'em, I know, but I can't see but five, and they're lookin' right this way. If you'll jist hand me a gun I'll wing one o' the birds right onter the spot."

Frank handed him a rifle, and without moving his head the hunter raised it carefully up to a level with his face and fired. There was a loud yell, but, whether he had "winged" the savage he was unable to tell. Still retaining his position, he soon discovered a single savage raise his head in the same place where he had seen the five. Frank handed him another rifle which he immediately brought to bear upon the savage, but, with what effect, he was still unable to tell; for scarcely had the smoke from his rifle cleared away than he discovered a *white* arrow ascend straight into the air about half way between him and the Indians; and while the Trailer stood trying to ascertain the import of the signal, a rifle-ball went whistling through the tussock, so close to his head that another lock of his hair was cut off, as well as several stalks of the grass. Of course, Thornpath went down upon his knees in a twinkling, and the tussock, as a matter of course, disappeared, also; and, a moment later, a triumphant savage laugh rang out over the swamp; then the hunter knew that his exploit with the grass had been detected!

"Oh, I'll beat ye yet, ye red hellyons!" exclaimed the Trailer, growing somewhat indignant. "I'll make ye laugh when the other corner of yer mouth afore many minits. I'm not goin' to let my ha'r lifted a bit at a time—no, sir; all or none, that's my motto. But, we've got to change our base a little. Them ar' Mister Lees know too well whar to look for us."

So saying, the hunters took up their rifles, and crawled

along until they came to a low swale or basin. In this, which would serve as a kind of breastwork, they made another stand.

Laying down his rifle and side tomahawk, the old Trailer concluded to try the grass one more. But, the savages had watched, and saw, by the movement of the grass, when and to what point their enemy had charged, and, as soon as his head rose above the grass, than a bullet whistled through the tussock.

"That's played out: it's gittin' old, and I'll do—"

The old Trailer did not say what he would do, for, at that instant, his eyes fell upon a savage that had crawled to the edge of the swale upon his hands and knees, and was in the very act of hurling a tomahawk at the head of young Harwood.

Quicker than the lightning's flash leaps from the dark storm-cloud, the Trailer snatched up his tomahawk from the ground, and, with a single swoop, severed the red-skin's head from the shoulders, the trunkless member rolling like a ball down into the center of the swale.

"That, lad!" said the latter, as coolly as though he had beheaded a serpent. "That's what old hunters call a clean stick, for there's nary drop of blood on the tomahawk."

"It's what I call a bloody deed!" said Harwood, seriously.

"That's true, Frank, but it saved your life. The Indian was just in the act of leppin' off your head. If I had been any easier I couldn't been so quick, and if I hadn't been so quick as I war, your head 'stead of the pole's would be layin' that. That red skin wouldn't hav stopped a minute to do any thing, from sleepin' a sleepin' hole to wonderin' a sight's more; but, that's three things that I can't do—that is, I won't let an Indian squaw, nor papoose, nor an Indian in his sleep; so my notion it's wiser the way of old hunters. But I never be here to wing a red skin, no different here, where he's awake tryin' to get a shot at my skin. That's my notion."

"What do you suppose is the meaning of this?" asked Frank, advancing and removing from the back of the dead savage, a large quiver filled with arrows of which some were black and some white.

"I'll tell ye," said the old Trailer; "I knowed that war

some deviltry up, awhile ago, and *that's* what it is. That dead Ingin hez been noted among his friends for his cussed sneak in'ness, in crawlin' up onter things in the grass, sich as deer and enemies, and I'll bet they call him Snake-in-the-grass. Wad, he crawled out here, like a snake, sure enuff, to watch us, and whenever we was standin' still, he'd signal to his friends by shootin' a arrer straight up, and whenever we war movin' 'boat, he'd signal by shootin' a *white* arrer in the direction we'd gone, tryin', tharby, to catch us in a trap. Old Thornpath is too old a bird to be cotched on sich chaff as *that*—he's seen sich too often to bite every time. And now, I perpose to turn the scale, since we've got Snake-in-the-grass in outen the wet."

Having rearranged the grass about his head, old Thade took the savage's quiver and emptied the arrows out; then he took the trunkless head of the red-skin, and placed it in its natural position on the open end of the quiver.

"Now, Frank, you git Snake-in-the-grass's bow, and one of the white arrers ready to shoot the moment I say the word."

Seeing the hunter's daring intention, Frank did as requested. Thornpath then carefully raised the head of the savage to a level with his own, and, in this position, raised himself slowly up, bringing just about half of the savage's tatted head in view above the top of the grass, with his own head just behind it, so that he could see over the top of it. As he had expected, he saw the bushy eyes of the five savages peering about above the grass, about one hundred yards away. Of course, they saw the top of their comrade's head—which the Trader moved slightly from one side to the other, to make them believe that he—the savage—was looking about for the whites—and from the fact of its being in so close proximity to the tussle of grass, they supposed it a natural one—little dreaming what a bold and fearless stratagem they were being made victims of.

After holding the trunkless head above the top of the grass for a moment, the old Trader dropped it to the ground, but still retained his position, and said in a low tone:

"Now, Frank, send an arrer to the north-west."

Frank did as commanded, and sure enough, the five red skins darted away in the direction that the arrow was shot.

Thornpath now dropped himself down, and seizing his rifle, tore the grass from about his head, and exclaimed:

"Now, Frank, is our time to rub 'em out. I started 'em in throwin' 'em off'n the course, and they're gain' it, hekey-e-brindle, to'rds the nor'-west. Let's go for 'em, my boy."

So saying, the hunters glided through the grass in a south-westerly direction, striking the trail of the five savages, as Thornpath had intended, but a few steps behind them.

Expecting to find the pale-faces before them, the savages glided along, little thinking that at the same moment the whites were following *them*, until they—the whites—were upon them. But, alas, ere they could raise a rifle, one flash was fired, and so close were they, that two Sioux were killed outright, and one mortally wounded. The other two uttered a yell and fled, but the whites gave chase, and ere they had gone far compelled them to stop and give battle. The redskins dropped their rifles and drew their knives, but, before they could use them, Thornpath threw his tomahawk and struck one of them fair on the head, killing him instantly. The other turned to flee, but Frank clubbed his rifle, and dealt him a blow that brought him down.

Thornpath now gave vent to a series of triumphant yells that echoed far over the great swamp. True, his victory over the nine savages had been complete, though at a terrible risk of their lives. After awhile he said:

"Now, Frank, my boy, we kin tramp on; but, if we don't salted these ere reds, we'd never get a mile from the swamp alive, so 's we've lost much time here, s'pose we head out."

"I am ready," responded Frank.

They resumed their journey northward; but, as the excitement of their late trouble began to wear off, Frank noticed that his arm was beginning to swell and become quite painful. He expressed his fears that he would be unable to make the journey before them, but he determined to go on so long as he could.

Pressing on, they soon cleared the Black Swamp, but they had left it but a few steps behind, when their ears caught the sound of a human voice, and, turning about, they beheld, to their utmost consternation, Miss Sarah Marsh Stamp emerge from the edge of the swamp and advance toward them.

"In the name of heaven, Miss Stump, what are you doing here, and where is Mabel?" asked Frank, excitedly.

"The good Lord only knows where Mabel is. We managed to escape from the Indians, and became separated in the gloomy woods running from a bear. I hunted and searched for poor Mabel, but could find her nowhere, so I started for the Post; and when I reached this side of the swamp, I hear Indians yelling and shooting on the other side, so I hid in the grass till you came from the swamp," the spinster said, considerably agitated.

"Then, Mabel is not in the power of Red Hand?"

"Red Demon! you'd better say," the woman exclaimed, indignantly. "For Red Hand is nobody else than that great, horrid, sneaking, low-lived Carl Oakley! No, Mabel is not in his power, and if the bear did not catch her, she is wandering about in the woods, poor deary," and Miss Stump brushed a tear from her eyes.

"How d'ye git away from the chief, Miss Stump?" asked the old Trailer.

"Why, I made him and his Indians a pot of soup for their supper, and flavored it with a bottle of my tooth medicine that put the beauties all to sleep."

"And ye did that over in the woods, eh?" asked Thornpath, somewhat excited.

"Yes, sir, over yonder."

"Then drown me in the Pool o' Siloam, and bury me in the wilderness o' July, if I don't hev Carl Oakley's skulp—every hair o' it, my boy!" and the old Trailer grasped the hilt of his knife, and clenched his teeth savagely, fiercely.

After he had heard all of Miss Stump's story, he turned to Frank and said:

"Boy, you're wounded, and 'd jist be in my way, for I'm bound to work with a vengeance, so you'd best go with Miss Stump back to her friends, and I'd bring your sweetheart safe home by to-morrow night, and no tellin' how many skulls."

Frank knew that it would be useless contending with the old Trailer; besides, he was well aware that he would just be an incubator on the hunter's hands, for his arm was swelling and growing more painful every moment. He knew that Thornpath would never return without Mabel if

she were alive; and his heart almost sickened with grief when he thought that she might then be suffering all the horrors of a terrible death, or lying stark and stiff in the dark woods, or dying by inches for the want of some loved one's hand to hold a draught of water to her burning lips.

"Yes, Thede, I will go back with Miss Stump," he said. "I know I shall be of no assistance to you now. Go, and may God speed you, old friend."

"Thet's the way to talk, my boy; so good-by and a safe return to the Post, is the wishes o' yours respectfully."

So saying, the Trailer moved away and was soon lost to view behind a swell in the prairie.

Frank and Miss Stump turned their faces southward, and entered the Black Swamp, on their return to the Post, where they arrived safely about sunset, and joined their friends at the *cache*.

CHAPTER IX.

A SERPENT'S EYES.

THERE are times when slumber brings no rest to the wearied mind, but rather magnifies all the past troubles through the agencies of dreams. Such was the case with Mabel Prescott. Though she dropped into a sound sleep almost the moment she sunk to the earth, and slept until long after morning came with its songs of birds, her sleep was any thing but refreshing to her troubled mind. In her dreams she was carried away, far away, and placed alone on an arid desert, to die of hunger and thirst. Her brain seemed on fire, her recollection dimmed. How she came there she knew not, but she attempted to rise and walk, but her limbs were paralyzed. She tried to pray, but her tongue was stiff with thirst, while hunger was gnawing at her stomach like a terrible canker. Far away she could hear the mocking sound of falling water and the caroling of the little birds that seemed rejoicing over her suffering. Now and then a burning simoom would sweep across her face, and almost suffocate her; then a dark cloud,

charged with terrible thunder, would overshadow her, and she seemed sinking, sinking, into an awful abyss. Thus dreaming, she awoke, and the first object that met her sight was a black, shaggy form standing over her. It was some time before she could remember where she was; then she started with an inward shudder of terror as she recognized that black form standing over her to be that of a bear—perhaps the same that had caused her separation from Miss Stump.

Poor Mabel; her situation indeed was critical. She dared not, she could not, cry out nor move a muscle. The brute stood so close that she could feel his hot breath in her face—see the sharp, white fangs and the glaring eyes in which she could see her own motionless figure mirrored. Her terror was intense, and she was about closing her eyes in despair, when suddenly the bear turned and walked off into the forest.

Breathing a prayer of thanks to the great Protector, she sprung to her feet and would have fled, but at that moment a form glided out of the undergrowth and confronted her.

It was a hideous savage, in war-paint!

Mabel would have attempted to escape, but, almost the same instant that the savage disputed her passage, she saw a *black hand* thrust down from the low foliage overhead, seize the savage by the scalp lock, and quickly a man dropped from the thick foliage upon the astounded savage. Then she heard a dull thud, thud, thud, followed by an unearthly yell from the Indian, whose body the next moment fell lifeless to the ground; and ere the bewildered Mabel had time for a thought, Egypt, the negro hunter, stood before her.

"Egypt!" she exclaimed, with a mingled feeling of surprise and joy.

"I's de chile, Miss Mapel," the darky replied.

"How in the world came you here?"

"De Lor' only knows; dis nigger don't. Guess de Ingings run me here. Awful time, Miss Mapel. De woods full ob Ingings."

"How long have you been in this tree, Egypt?"

"Ebber sence a long time, Miss Mapel. I see'd de big bear, and I war 'fraid to breaf fear he hurt you. Dat's why

I keep so still; and now, Miss Mapel, will you tell dis nigger how you come here all 'lone?"

Mabel related her adventures to the African from the time she was taken up to that moment.

"Too bad, too bad, Miss Mapel; bat res' s'wah dis chile will die 'fore harm shill come to ye 'gin."

"I will feel safe under your protection," said Mabel, "for I know you are a brave man, Krypt."

"Golly, dat's 'couraging, Miss Mapel. Dat's de las' time dis nigger eber hear praise from de lips o' an angel. So come, Miss Mapel, and let's be gwine, for de good Lord only knows how much troubles is befo' us," and the kind, good-hearted darky took the maiden's hand in his, and, with his rifle on his shoulder they set off through the woods.

As they moved along the darky kept a wary watch about them; not a leaf rustled that his practiced ear did not catch the sound.

The sun had long since been up and threw its golden light over the wood-land, that was sparkling with the myriads of dew-drops that hung upon the pendent leaves. Birds sang their morning carols until the woods were vied with their songs. Bright-eyed squirrels nickered and chattered about upon the ground and the trees; and the cool morning breeze laden with the perfume of flowers, drifted through the boughs, ever and anon sending a mist of silvery spray upon the two pedestrians that were wending their way through the forest.

To Mabel, all nature seemed changed from an awful darkness into golden light—a wild, romantic paradise. She could scarcely believe that the forest with its golden sunlight, its song of birds, its vine-forested trees, its velvety carpet of green, its trailing foliage, its beautiful wild flowers, its balmy breeze, its babbling brooks, was the same forest with its evil air, lurking foes, howling beasts, dismal groans and wails, ghastly voices, startling cries—through which she had passed a captive and fugitive the night before. Oh, that such a night would never come again!—that such days would ever dawn with joys renewed! But, alas! poor Mabel little knew what troubles that day was yet to bring.

They had traveled some distance, when, far ahead, their

ears suddenly caught the report of a gun, followed by a fierce, savage yell. They came to a sudden halt beneath the low drooping branches of an elm tree and listened, and they could still hear a severe confusion some distance away.

"What do you think the trouble is, Egypt?" asked Mabel.

"Dunno, Miss Mabel, 'zactly, but tinks dar's somebody in trouble. Jus' like's not sam ob our frien's, Miss Mabel. Specs dis nigger better go see and help friend."

"Yes, Egypt, go," said Mabel, "I will remain under this tree until you return."

"Dat's right, Miss Mabel; I'll be back soon," and the darky turned and glided into the undergrowth.

Mabel sat down at the foot of the tree, around which the low drooping branches and adjacent undergrowth formed a covert in which to hide from the eyes of an enemy if such might happen to pass near. She closed her eyes to reflect over the past twenty-four hours which to her seemed like an age, and thus reflecting she fell into a gentle doze. Presently she awoke, and instantly became conscious that she was gazing at two beautiful tiny sparks of fire upon the ground before her. What is it? she asked herself, and attempted to put out her hand and touch it. But, her limb was motionless. She attempted to rise but she could not, nor could she move her eyes from those tiny sparks before her, that kept up a gentle, swaying motion—now receding almost beyond sight, then advancing so close that they seemed like sparks of living fire. Suddenly a horrible reality rushed across Mabel's mind. She was under the terrible fascination of a rattlesnake. Those tiny specks were its eyes, back of which she could see the dark outlines of its body, coiled, fold upon fold, upon itself with horrible precision. Time after time she attempted to rise or cry out and break the horrible spell, but her efforts were fruitless. She could not move her eyes from those tiny eyes that were darting their rays of diabolical enchantment into her very soul. Beautiful colors flashed before her, and a sound like the distant song of the siren fell upon her ears. She seemed floating on the air—floating, floating, despite her efforts, into the very fangs of the serpent, whose form appeared to be magnified a hundred fold. But, suddenly, a dark form sprang in between her and the snake, and

the next instant the horrible spell was broken, and the serpent writhing in its death-agonies.

"Oh, Egypt!" Mabel exclaimed, springing to her feet, "you have saved my life again! How can I—"

She did not finish the sentence, for, as the mist which steady gazing at the serpent had brought over her eyes cleared away, she saw that it was a savage instead of Egypt that had saved her life and stood before her.

Poor, persecuted Mabel! Her heart had become so isolated by suffering that she did not cry out, nor even try to escape; but, lifting her eyes she gazed as steadily into those of the savage as she had a few moments before into the eyes of the serpent. A smile was upon his dusky face, but, such a smile Mabel never before saw on the face of an Indian. It was not a brutal, demoniac smile, but one of manly pride and admiration—such as might have lit up the face of some young lord of the Middle Ages after having won the hand of his "ladye faire" by some daring exploit.

The Indian was young, tall and majestic as the pine-oak, with flashing black eyes that were entirely free of that evil, cunning light peculiar to his race; and with features whose contour were strongly Anglo-Saxon. His dress gave evidence of his being a chief, or some other dignitary of his race.

"Okaleah come jist in time," he said, pointing to the writhing serpent.

Mabel knew by his tone and general demeanor that, though an Indian, he had not a savage heart—that he seemed proud of his saving her life; and, in return, she said, very kindly:

"You saved my life, and I feel very grateful for it to you."

Okaleah smiled and replied:

"The young pale rose is very beautiful, and Okaleah knows that Red Hand and his braves are searching everywhere for her with evil in their hearts. If they find her, she will suffer much, but if she will go with Okaleah, he will protect her with his life, for Okaleah is a brave chief, and heartens not to Red Hand. Will the pale rose go, or wait to be dragged away by Red Hand, who is not far away?"

"So, then, Red Hand has recovered from the effects of the opium," thought Mabel.

Again she was in a distressing situation. She felt certain that what Okaleah had said was true, and she disliked to wound his pride by refusing to accept his protection, for she knew not what treachery lay concealed in his heart. She did not tell him of her sable escort, and evaded his question for a long time, in hopes that Egypt would return and afford an ample excuse for refusing his protection; but the moments dragged wearily by; Egypt did not come; Okaleah was growing restless and impatient, and Mabel could do nothing else than go with him, for she was almost certain that she would have to, anyhow. So the young chief led the way northward, and Mabel followed him.

Soon they emerged into the open prairie that stretched away north to the Checauque river, where was situated the village of Red Hand.

Stopping on the edge of the prairie, Okaleah glanced warily about in every direction, then slowly resumed his journey, a light of admiration beaming in his flashing eyes. He had come but a short distance, however, when their ears caught the sound of clattering hoofs behind; and, glancing back, they beheld two persons, one of whom they recognized as Red Hand, riding toward them.

A low cry of despair escaped Mabel's lips at the sight of the chief, but Okaleah, clutching the hilt of his knife, said:

"Remember, pale rose, Okaleah will die before harm shall come to you. The pale rose is mine, now."

There was much, yet there was little in Okaleah's words for which the poor girl could gather strength and hope. To herself she repeated his words:

"Remember, pale rose, Okaleah will die before harm shall come to you. The pale rose is mine now."

CHAPTER X.

TREED.

IN less than an hour after parting with Frank Harwood and Miss Stump at the Black Swamp, Thornpath, the Trailer, reached the timber in which Red Hand had encamped.

He had no difficulty in finding the chief's trail, which he followed on till he came to the camp. But, alas, he was greatly disappointed; the savages had swept off the effects of the narcotic and gone; but much of their plunder still remained scattered about in every direction.

"By cats and furies!" exclaimed the old Trailer, "too late for a single scalp; every creased varmint gone?"

"Oh, salvation! Is that you, Thede?"

The hunter started with sudden surprise at the sound of that voice, coming, as it seemed, from the earth, hollow and sepulchral in its intonations.

"Ya-as—it's—me," drawled the Trailer; "who the d—uce are you?"

In reply to his question, Josiah Jenkins slipped from a large hollow log near by, and stood before him, his face besmeared with dust and dirt.

"Holy water o' the Jordan!" exclaimed Thornpath, "Josiah Jenkins, as I live! Why, old feller, I thought you was dead and gone, long ago. What ye doin' here? Come, old friend, give us a bit o' yer hist'ry since I last seen you. What's the nigger?"

"The Lord only knows where the black crowd is," replied Josiah, returning to his old song. "I presume you know that we was attacked by 'bout fifty Indians on the island, after Harwood; and I tell you what, Thede, I walked from them heels to 'er Deer Creek style, and if Egypt hadn't run we could 'a' licked the whole c—b—le; but, of course, I couldn't fight 'em all, and, after layin' out about twenty, I was overpowered and taken prisoner. Gyp give himself up with me a while. Well, then, they fetched us over here in the woods,

and, after makin' Gyp kiss one of the horriest old squaws in America, they were goin' to burn us alive; so I determined on one more effort for my life, and breakin' my bonds like a bow string, I lit out like a streak of greased lightning, with every savage at my heels. But I soon outrun them; but just as they left me, a pack of a thousand wolves got after me, and after strewin' the ground for a mile with their carcasses, I found this hollow log and crawled into it and fainted with over-exertion. I suppose poor Gyp was roasted alive."

"What time o' night did ye drap into this log?" asked Thede.

"Long enough before midnight."

"And didn't you know that a party o' reds, with Mabel Prescott and Miss Stump as captives, were encamped right there last night?"

"Well—no—but I had an awful dream about—"

"Hark!"

"Oh, salvation! the Ingins! the Ingins are on us!"

True enough; while Josiah was relating his adventures, seven savages glided out of the forest like shadows, and, ere our friends were apprised of the fact, they were upon them.

Quick as thought Thornpath shot down two of them at a single discharge, but, the next instant, he was overpowered and thrown to the ground, his weapons taken from him and his arms pinioned. Josiah sprung to the friendly hollow log, and started in getting about half-way in, when a savage caught him by the legs and dragged him out.

Both the captives were subjected to much cruel treatment, to the humiliation of the old Trader and the fears of Josiah; and the natural follies of the latter were soon discovered, and of course the savages took a barbarous delight in torturing him in every possible way.

"Keep a stiff upper lip, Josiah," said the old hunter; "don't utter a word, and they'll let ye alone."

"Wah! wah! wah! keep brave," said a savage, walking up to Thede, and only stopping him in the face.

"Wah! wah! keep coward, and take that to settle yer stomach," exclaimed Thornpath, springing to his feet, and giving the savage a kick in the stomach, that fairly doubled him on the ground at a distance of ten feet away.

"Ugh!" grunted the savage, gathering himself, "pale-face dog kick loud, but me kill," and, seizing a tomahawk, he would have wreaked a terrible vengeance on the armer of his "sour" stomach, had his comrades not prevailed on him.

"Mus' no kill the Crooked Trail. Mus' leave at the village," said a savage,

"Not ez ennybody knows of, I won't burn, my I-um-um."

"He! he! he!" laughed a savage. "Too much green?"

"I say, red-skin, how's yer bread-basket since I killed ye?"

"That how," said the savage, advancing, and giving the Trailer another slap, having no fears of being kicked, since the hunter's feet had been tied.

But, scarcely had he dealt the blow, than Thornpath made a lunge forward, and gave the savage another drive in the stomach with his *head*, that sent him spinning to grass a second time, and from the effects of which he did not recover so soon.

"I sw'ar, red-skin, that war a bu'ster," said the old Trailer: "how's yer bread-basket now?"

The only reply the savage made was a desperate gasping for breath, and a significant shake of his fist at Thornpath, who broke into a roar of laughter at the wheezing red-skin's discomfiture, while the other savages looked at their friend as much as to say, "Let him alone, then."

However, the savage did not renew his attack, and here the quarrel ended. One of the red skins, who seemed to be a leader of the party, advanced to Thornpath and said:

"The great Serpent Trail knows where the wigwams of the pale-faces are, yonder," and he pointed away toward the north-east, in the direction of Shagster's settlement, on the Checanque river.

"Ward, what's that your business if I do?" retorted Thornpath.

"But the pale face, Serpent Trail, knows the quick trail," the savage said, stooping over and running his finger along upon the ground by way of illustration.

"Be a fool if I didn't, when I've tramped it as many times as I've lifted Indian skulls," replied the old Trailer.

"But the Indian only knows the long trail to the pale-faces'

"wigwams yonder," and he ran his finger along in a zigzag course.

"I don't keer a dang if ye din't know it at all."

"But, the Serpent Trail must show the hidden trail, or die, here."

"Ye goin' to the settlement to do some stealin'?"

"For scalps. Red Hand has dug up the hatchet, and the pale-face and his wigwams must fall."

"But, I'm thinkin' that the hatchet 'll be buried afore long, and Red Hand and his red demons with it."

"Wah! pale-face no prophet; but must lead Ingins to the wigwams yonder, by the hidden trail. If not, must die here. I have spoken, and let Serpent Trail answer."

"Wah! I tell ye, red-skin," said Thornpath, an idea flashing in his quick, inventive mind, "ye seem like a pooty fair leg of a hain, so I'll show ye the near cut across to the Slaughter settlement."

"Th's good. The pale-face shall not die until they reach the village of the Red Hand."

"All hunky, red-skin, all hunky."

The old Trader's feet were untied, and he was allowed to stand up. Josiah was placed by his side, and then, with seven tomahawks, the five savages took their position behind them, and in this order they set off through the forest, going in the direction of Slaughter's settlement.

At times the savages would walk in single file, then two and three abreast, just as the convenience of the road permitted, while the prisoners were compelled to walk side and side with their hands tied behind their backs, and all the time under an upraised tomahawk.

"Oh, salvation?" groaned Josiah. "Thee, I'm afraid our legs are numb-ered, and that we are going—"

"—The way the Holy Prophet went?" interrupted the Trader.

"No, no, you shall not take flight of our condition, for—"

"I tell ye, 'sah, just keep yer eye peeled, and a'd hev 'em Ingins in a better place than they've got us, afore ten minutes."

"Ingins! he's no more, Thee. You are sure'y crazy, for—"

"Lookee, do you see that mound jist ahead?" the Trailer asked, in a whisper.

"Yes; what—"

"Tread light onto it—*mind*."

The mound in question was a slight rise in the ground directly in the path before them. Some dead leaves and dry twigs were scattered about and upon it, almost hidden from view; yet, it seemed to be a landmark quite familiar to the old Trailer's eyes, and upon which seemed to rest great expectations, for his eyes flashed with an unusual glow, and his soul seemed to be centering upon a single hope.

As they neared the mysterious mound, the Trailer's steps became shorter, but quick and elastic; and when they at last reached it, he whispered to Josiah:

"Jump it, 'Siah."

Simultaneous they both sprang over the mound, and the savages supposing they were trying to escape, spring after them in a body, planting their footsteps directly on the little elevation; but, at that instant, the earth beneath them gave way, and they sank down, down, in wild confusion into a dark and gloomy abyss; while the captives, free and triumphant, stood unharmed upon its brink.

"Back up here, 'Siah, back up here, and let me catch yer hands, quick!" said the old Trailer, excitedly.

The two hunters placed themselves back to back, thus bringing their hands together, and, with some labor, succeeded in releasing their arms. This done, Thornpath turned and looked down into the pit upon the struggling, howling savages.

The pit was about ten feet deep by four in width, and filled with green, slimy, stagnated water. The walls above the water were festooned with slimy yellow roots and green aquatic plants, among which wriggled a number of water snakes and bull-frogs—together, by sight and sound, making it one of the most diabolical objects the old Trailer ever witnessed.

To Thornpath, the existence of this pit had been known for more than a year; for a party of hunters, among whom he was leader, had dug it for a bear-trap, and concealed, by laying small sticks and leaves over it, barely sufficient to hold a thin layer of dirt, which was, also, concealed from prying

eyes by leaves and brush being laid over it. However, the bear that it was intended for never came around, and the pit-fall remained undisturbed, until it had served its originator a better turn, as we have seen.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Thornpath, as he looked upon the savages floundering and struggling in the water to their necks. "I say, red-skins, how's that fur the near cut to the wigwams o' the pale-faces, yonder? It's a nearer cut to the happy landin' grounds, ain't it? How 'bout Red Hand and his hatchet and skulps now? Sich comes o' yer pokin' yer noses into white folks' affairs, fur the devil 'll git ye now, hatchets, skulps and all."

"Ugh! waugh!" grunted a half-strangling red-skin, who, being shorter than his companions, fared badly. "Serpent Trail great warrior—good pale-face—no see Ingin drown."

"Humph! that's cool," ejaculated the Trailer. "W'at the tarnation do I keer w'at comes o' ye? If ye'd ever studied moral philosophy o' the human family, ye'd find a leetle clause that says: 'Do unto Ingins as Ingins would do unto you.' Now, w'at 'd ye done unto me if ye hadn't got in thar and got me to Red Hand's village?"

"Scalped, and sizzled and burned!" exclaimed an indignant savage—the same whose "bread-basket" Thornpath had upset a short time previous.

"Then you 'uns kin struggle and strangle and drown fur all I keer," replied the hunter, as he stood and laughed at the red skins, in their vain attempt to escape from the pit.

Once an agile fellow succeeded in reaching the top by the aid of the slimy plants and his companions, but the loose, crumbly soil gave way, and he was precipitated back head-first, berying for a moment two of his companions beneath the debris, and routing the snakes and frogs in great confusion.

"Try it ag'in, red-skin," said the old Trailer. "Moral philosophy says: 'If at first ye don't succeed, try, try it ag'in.'"

"Waugh! pale-face weak squaw—big bloat—crooked tongue—"

"And a fine chap in gineral," interrupted the hunter; "but, I tell ye, red-skins, I don't want to be too hard on ye, so I

guess we'll hev to leave ye, and if ye git out, well an' I guess—ye'd better run home and tell the old man all about the mud-hole, Red Hand and his hatchet and scalps, and so forth."

So saying, the two hunters turned and disappeared rapidly away, knowing full well that the savages could not escape from the bear-pit without assistance, and that they were not likely to get soon.

As they had been relieved of all their weapons by the savages, they shaped their course back to Red Hand's camp, and by the directions given him by Mrs Stamp, Thede sought and found the rifles, tomahawks and knives, that the two women had concealed before fleeing the camp.

Having selected such weapons as they desired, our friends started off through the forest in search of Michel Proulx.

But, the fates of the evil one seemed to be following them to-day, for, in emerging from a clump of thick undergrowth, they found themselves face to face with two powerful Sioux warriors. As was natural upon such an encounter, Josiah Jenkins uttered his familiar "Oh, salvation!" and uttering this with all his speed, closely pursued by one of the Sioux, while the other engaged Thornpath in a deadly hand-to-hand conflict, which was short and decisive, resulting, as might easily be feared of the old Trifer; who, uttering a yell of victory, dashed away in pursuit of the savage that was closely pressing Josiah.

Though Josiah was considered a swift runner, he soon found that he was no match for the Sioux that was immediately gaining upon him, and would, undoubtedly, overtake him before Thede could render him the least assistance. But quite an important idea suddenly flashed in Josiah's mind, and, running up to a tall birch-wood tree, he began to climb it with the agility of a cat, and ere the pursuer came up he had reached the lower branches some twenty feet high. The Sioux uttered a yell, and hurled his tomahawk at Josiah's head, but the weapon fell wide of its mark and struck the limb of an adjacent tree. Finding this attempt to bring down his game, the red skin—being without a rifle—took out a long knife, and placing it between his standing toes, began to climb the tree also. But, scarcely had he got beyond the trunk, when Thede, closely pursued by a monstrous large black bear, made

his appearance quite hastily at the foot of the tree, and without a moment's hesitation, he threw his unloaded rifle into a clump of weeds, and began climbing the tree after the Indian, when a moment later, the bear began scratching the trunk after the old Trailer.

Samuel was undoubtedly in a precarious situation, but inasmuch as the bear was after the old Trailer, the Sioux seemed to consider the brute on "his side," and that victory was inevitable.

Josh, in the extremity of his fear, had climbed to the very top of the tree, and the Sioux was following him, but, as Thede was gaining on both bear and Indian, the latter saw that he would have some trouble with the Trailer before the bear could come to his assistance, and so he stopped in hopes that the Trailer would stop also.

"Ha! ha! ha!" the savage laughed, looking down at Thede, "pale-face in tight place. Bear git one—me t'other."

"Don't fool yerself, Mr. Sioux," replied the hunter. "I'm thinkin' different 'bout it; howsumever, you kin hev all ye want; but really, yo'd make a nice, delicate morsel fur the b'ar's dinner."

"Watch! pale face heap brag—me no fool with," and he began to ascend the tree again.

"Hold on, thar, red skin, hold on, thar, or I'll tickle your feet with this here knife point. Hold on, I say!"

The savage looked down, and seeing that the hunter was pressing him closely, determined to change his tactics and help the bear dispose of its game, without running any farther risks; so he began climbing down the tree, expecting to force the hunter back into the animal's jaws; and from the fact of his being after the old Trailer, he had no very serious fears of him.

Meanwhile, Brain had no time in argument about what he would do, but continued to ascend slowly, and now he was but a few feet from the hunter, when the Sioux began to close on him from above. It was a critical situation, but Thede was not flustered. Bracing himself against a large limb, he waited until the foot of the descending Sioux had got within reach; then he quickly threw up his arms, and, hooking his fingers over the top of the savage's leather moccasins, he gave

him such a powerful jerk, that the over-confident red-skin relaxed his hold and dropped head downward, below the hunter, who still held on to his feet. In a moment more, the bear reached the head of the swinging savage, who at once made a desperate attack upon the brute with his knife, cutting and slashing him in his face. This thoroughly maddened the fierce beast, who, seizing the head of the red-skin between his paws, was in the act of burying his white fangs in his brain, when Thede let go his hold on the Sioux's feet, and both savage and bear went thundering down among the branches, and struck the ground with such force, that the hunter felt a perceptible shock of the giant tree.

The Indian was killed outright by the fall, but the bear got up, gave a fierce growl, and went lumbering off into the forest, closely pursued by a dozen yelling savages, that burst, like a hurricane, from the shadows of the undergrowth at that instant.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW CHARACTER

RED HAND was the first of his party to sleep off the effects of the narcotic, though, when he awoke, it was broad daylight. Gazing about him for a moment in a kind of stupid bewilderment, he suddenly sprung to his feet and looked into the tent, to find it vacant—his birds flown!

A string of oaths, too horrible to mention, escaped his lips; and for a moment, he appeared like an enraged demon, and to fully demonstrate the spirit of his feelings, he walked up to his sleeping savages and gave each a fair kick, accompanied with an oath. By considerable exertion, he succeeded in rousing the brain-bewildered braves to a true realization of their situation, but, not until he had found the empty opium vial, did he know the cause of their sweet repose in the lethargic arms of Morpheus."

"Curse that old wench! I'll drag her brain with a hatchet the first time I git my eyes on her!" the chief ex-

claimed, fuming with rage. Then to his men: "Come, stir up here, you sleepy louts, and gather up what plunder you can carry, for our ponies have gone to the devil, and the first thing you know we'll be there too, for every gun and knife is gone."

Feeling quite "under the weather," the savages gathered up part of their plunder and set off through the woods, the chief fairly dancing with rage and baffled triumph. However, he had not gone far when he was so fortunate as to find his favorite horse, that had got fast in its tether-strap and was unable to follow the others off. Mounting the animal, he rode on in advance of his men. Presently he came to the edge of the prairie, but, before emerging from the shelter of the woods, he stopped to wait for his savages and see that the coast before them was clear. He soon discovered that it was *not*. Not more than half a mile away he saw two persons on horseback approaching the very point where he was standing, from the direction of Slaughter's settlement. As they came nearer, an evil light flashed in the chief's dark eyes and a triumphant, leering smile played about his bloodless lips, for he recognized the riders as George Raymond and his beautiful and peerless daughter Nora, who resided at Slaughter's settlement.

"Ah! I remember now," the chief said to himself; "it's old George and daughter going to the Post. To-day is when they promised to be there on a visit. Well, really, Carl O—, I mean Red Hand, you are in luck as well as out. True, I have lost that modest little violet of a Mabel, but who wouldn't exchange her for that peerless, haughty, dashing little rosebud, Nora Raymond. I'm glad she's coming, for it will save a ride to the settlement and perhaps a warm time; but the settlement must fall anyhow, especially if I git the girl, for the settlers might make it warm for me, or steal her away from me, if they're allowed to stay about. But Nora, Nora, peerless Nora I'm determined to have if it costs me every Indian. I know old George is grit to the backbone, but if the old coon don't give under, I'll give him a taste of *that*," and the chief drew a small, silver-mounted revolver from an inner pocket and held it up before him.

Whirling his animal he dashed back into the woods. In a moment he met his Indians, who during his absence, had been joined by another party of savages well armed. Having ap-

appropriated one of their tomahawks, a scalping-knife and a rifle he ordered them to conceal themselves, and capture alive the two pale-faces that were coming that way; and having seen that his orders were obeyed, he rode on for some distance; then dismounted and hitched his horse.

And all of this time George Raymond and his daughter were approaching the woods, all unconscious of the score of Luman tigers that were awaiting them in ambush.

George Raymond was just in the prime of manhood, scarcely forty years of age, a robust figure, strong, active and muscular, tall and commanding—in all, a figure of perfect manhood.

Nora Raymond partook much of her father's nobility. She was scarcely seventeen, yet nature had never formed nor art penciled a more exquisite, perfect, graceful nor lovely form than Nora Raymond possessed; while every lineament of her features was regular and clear as an ancient cameo. Masses of short ringlets, black-bronzed like the raven's wing, clustered about her well-poised head and a brow of alabaster whiteness. Black eyes, that seemed to look into your very soul, sparkled like diamonds from beneath their jetty fringe of lashes, and upon her cheeks the rose and lily blended their hues.

Mr. Raymond was riding a trained and spirited black horse, while his daughter rode a beautiful and graceful snow-white pony, handsomely caparisoned with saddle and bridle, which, let us say right here, was a present from her affianced husband, Captain Richard Stanfield, who at the time was on military duty at Fort Des Moines.

In a short time the father and daughter entered the timber, and as their road was somewhat obstructed, they reined their animals to a walk, and still, all unconscious of the hostile eyes that were fixed upon them, the score of couchant Luman tigers that lay in ambush for them, they rode on—on until they were right upon them. Then, with whines and yells, the savages sprung out, seized the animals by the bits, and jerked them back upon their haunches, throwing their riders to the ground. Both were instantly seized and bound, and Mr. Raymond's weapons taken from him; but, to Nora's joy, they overlooked a little silver-mounted revolver that was tucked away in her dress pocket.

The moment that the whites were secured, Red Hand made

his august appearance, with a leer of devilish pride and admiration upon his face. He had expected to frighten, with his red hands and savage appearance, the beautiful Nora, but he was disappointed. Arching her queenly head, she gave him one haughty glance, then turned away with scorn curling her lips.

The chief spoke. Nora started as though a dagger had been thrust into her bosom, a look of surprise, indignation and scorn upon her face.

"Father, do you know that voice?" she asked. "*It is Carl Oakley's.*"

"You are right, Miss Nora, though I don't know as it makes any material difference," the renegade replied. "I have no object now in disguising my voice nor even my person, for I am Red Hand all the same."

"Yes, and a traitor, villain and murderer of innocent women and children," said George Raymond.

"I hope, George Raymond, that by your insulting language you will not provoke me to commit another murder," the chief said, "at least, until you see your daughter my wife."

"Your wife!" Nora fairly hissed between her set teeth, a light of contempt flashing in her eyes. "Rather would I be the wife of the most degraded savage on earth than your wife—the wife of a traitor whose heart is blacker than midnight, whose evil deeds are as numerous as the stars, and whose hands are red with the blood of women and children, murdered in their sleep!"

Brave Red Hand fairly winced under the peerless Nora's derisive words, and a guilty twitching played about his sinister mouth. After a moment's silence, he said:

"I admire your dashing, brightly spirit, Miss Nora, and shall not allow your womanly temper nor invectives to provoke me to blow your brains out, but I shall forthwith convey you to the Indian village and make you my wife, willing or not willing."

"Brave, noble Red Hand!" sneered Nora.

"You will both mount your animals, and we will be off," said the chief, surlily.

George Raymond and his daughter both knew that it was useless to add a word against this order, for they were en-

tirely in the villain's power, so they at once mounted their animals as bidden. Nora was allowed the free use of her hands, and it was as much as she could do to keep from drawing her tiny revolver and sending a bullet through the brain of the miscreant chief; but such an act, she knew, would only bring the wrath of the other savages upon both her and her father.

Mr. Raymond's hands were tied behind his back, then his feet were tied by a cord passing from one to the other under the animal's breast, so that it was impossible for him to escape, even from the back of his horse.

Mounting his animal, Red Hand attached a lead-rope to the bits of both the captives' horses, and then fastened the ends of the rope to the pommel of his own saddle, thus taking control of all the animals; and with a captive on each side, he set off once more on his triumphant march to the village, the savages on foot following close behind.

George Raymond spoke not a word, for his heart was too much troubled—not for his own, but his child's fate to which she was being carried. He studied every possible chance of escape, and there was but one in any way feasible, but even this was impossible, for a while, at least. The animal he rode was a swift runner, and it would require but a single word to send him flying over the plain had he not been fastened to the chief's saddle with the lead-rope; and all that he could do under the circumstances was to wait and watch for the chance; but, hardly had he come to this conclusion when the report of a rifle rung out through the forest and a bullet whistled through the air and struck the ground a few feet in advance of the chief's horse. Before Red Hand and the savages could fully recover from their consternation caused by the report of the rifle, George Raymond was flying over the prairie—guiding his animal by the swaying of his body. The bullet that whizzed through the air had cut the lead-rope in twain!

Several random shots were fired at the fugitive, who soon disappeared around a point in the timber.

But who fired that unerring bullet?

Red Hand halted and sent his braves in every direction in search of the unseen, unknown marksman, but the search

was fruitless, simply for the reason that the eyes of the redskins were unable to penetrate the depth of a large hollow tree from which, about twenty feet from the ground, a pair of sharp eyes and the upper portion of a black face were peering through a knot-hole. It seemed that Ezypt, for he it was in the tree, read, by intuition, the settler's thoughts in regard to the lead-rope, and fired the shot at the very moment Raymond's eyes were upon the rope.

"If the villain that fired that shot is found, it will be a case of life and death with him, now mind," said Red Hand to Nora.

"He is a good shot, whoever he is," retorted Nora, "and it might be that he will send another bullet through your chiefship's regal head."

"Humph! that bullet has not been cast that will—" began the chief, but he did not finish his sentence, for at that instant the unknown rifle rang out again, and a bullet whistled so close to Red Hand's head that quite a furrow was plowed the whole length of his forehead; and so sudden and severe was the shock that the king of the prairie came near being unhorsed.

Nora burst into a little mocking laugh at the chief's mishap, as she said:

"Why, my gallant knight of paint and feathers, you terminate your sentence quite abruptly—what were you going to say about the bullet? Really, you have quite a large mark—birth-mark I suppose—upon your intellectual forehead."

"Curse you, girl!" he fairly shouted, rubbing his brow, from which the blood was running down his bedaubed face in little rivulets, giving him a grim and comical look, "tride not with me or I'll be the death of you."

"Ay, my lord, my gallant knight of the paint and feathers; you are beside yourself, art thou not? Can I not revive in thy heart, oh chief, one spark of the spirit of the days of knight errantry, when brave knights and chieftains won fair ladies instead of stealing them?"

"Come on!" growled the chief, fiercely, and in a moment more they were flying over the prairies all alone, at a break-neck speed. Several times Nora placed her hand in her

pocket, but the chief watched her so narrowly that she could not accomplish that which was in her mind—uppermost and constantly.

Suddenly, as they swept around the base of a hillock, they came upon an Indian and white woman who were moving in the same direction, but on foot.

One glance at the pale, sad face, and Nora recognized the woman, and in tones of the tenderest love, she cried:

“Oh, dear Mabel, it is you!”

“Yes, Nora, and God pity us.”

“Ho! ho! ho!” laughed the chief, drawing rein before Mabel Prescott and her dusky companion, his face besmeared with coagulated blood, “so I have found you, my truest, modest little violet! Truly, the Fates favor me! Two pretty wives—the dashing rosebud and the modest violet—umph! Okaleah, assist my truant to a seat behind my dashing rosebud.”

Okaleah drew himself up, and let his hand wander involuntarily toward his belt. A noble and determined look was upon his face, and his eyes flashed like coals of living fire.

“No; the white lily is mine,” said Okaleah. “I saved her life, and I have a right to her.”

“Okaleah! dog of a chief!” exclaimed Red Hand, fiercely, “do you know with whom you talk?”

“I do; but I will not listen. Okaleah is strong, and does not fear the white chief. He is brave, and fears none.”

For a moment the two men glared at each other in silence. Okaleah, brave, noble and majestic—savage though he was, deserving the admiration North bestowed upon him; while Red Hand, beastly, cunning and cowardly, seemed more like a fiend than a human in his point and goad.

“Okaleah,” he finally said, disengaging his tomahawk, “unless you do my bidding I will cut you down.”

An uneasily light flashed in Okaleah's eyes, and he too began loosening his tomahawk, but before he could do so, Red Hand saw his preparations for defense, and, quicker than lightning he threw his weapon, and struck the young chief dead at his feet. But, at that instant, Nora, who was well, *reached over and took Red Hand's revolver from his belt and tossed it out into the grass, leaving him without any weapon at all.*

Then, quickly drawing her own tiny revolver, she leveled it at the head of the renegade, and in a firm, unwavering voice, she said :

"Red Hand! murderer! unless you do *my* bidding I will shoot you down with as little mercy as you showed yon noble chief."

The chief turned his face toward Nora, and to his horror and surprise beheld the dark tube of the little revolver glaring into his face like the eye of doom. His hand felt for his own revolver, but it was gone, and terror seemed to convulse his whole body.

"Carl Oakley," continued Nora, "as true as there is a God, I will shoot you dead unless you dismount from that animal's back; and I will give you just *two* minutes to go on. Now *mind!*"

At heart, Red Hand was a coward, and in the invincible tone, the firm-set features, the steady, flashing eyes, the motionless figure, the steady arm of Nora Raymond, he saw a certain death—a death that could be avoided only by the humiliation of obeying a girl—a brave, noble and peerless girl.

For a moment the chief hesitated; but when Nora called out "one," he began to dismount, his eyes fixed upon the little tube that followed him wherever he went.

"Now," said Nora, when he had dismounted, without moving the revolver from a level with his head, "move not out of your tracks, or I fire the instant you do!" Then to Mabel: "**Mount this pony.**"

In an instant Mabel sprung into the chief's saddle, and in a moment more they dashed away, leaving the defeated, cowardly chief standing alone like a grim statue, gazing after them with stolid features.

"Good-by, my gallant knight of dirt and feathers," called Nora, with a wave of her hand.

"Oh, Nora, Nora!" exclaimed Mabel, "you have saved us from a terrible fate."

"That's true, Mabel, but it wasn't much of a job, I'm sure."

"No; Carl Oakley is a coward as well as a traitor. Oh, Nora, he has destroyed the Post, and I know not whether any

of my friends are alive," and Mabel went on and related all her trials and troubles since Oakley first met her on the prairie, and wept as though her heart would break.

Nora did all in her power to cheer and comfort her, and gave her much to hope for.

CHAPTER XII.

RICHARD IS HIMSELF AGAIN.

THE fugitives shaped their course directly south, keeping to the left of the grove, for fear of running into the power of the savages that Red Hand had left behind. After they had ridden half a mile, a swell in the prairie hid Red Hand from view, and then they reined in their animals to a slow gallop, feeling that beyond his presence they had little to fear. But in this they were sadly disappointed. On gaining a commanding eminence, they looked back and saw a party of several mounted Indians draw up before the solitary chief; then they saw one of the savages dismount, and Red Hand vault into the saddle, and, followed by his warriors, he dashed furiously away in pursuit of the girls.

"Merciful heavens, Nora!" exclaimed Mabel, "Red Hand and a band of his savages are in pursuit of us."

"True, Mabel, but let us hope for the best, and ride, ride for our lives," replied pretty Nora, giving her animal the rein. "We had better turn toward the timber, for, if we succeed in reaching it in advance of the chief, he can not follow us so fast as when we are in plain sight all the time."

So the fugitives turned at right-angles and rode toward the timber. Red Hand saw their intention and took across the prairie to cut them off from their hoped-for cover: but, the maidens had little fears of this, for they were fully a mile in advance; and when the forest was at last reached, the pursuers were some half a mile behind.

The fugitives had begun to congratulate each other on their good success, when unfortunately Nora's animal stepped in

an ant-hill, and almost falling to the ground, strained its leg severely.

"Oh, Mabel! Mabel!" exclaimed Nora, "poor Eagle has hurt himself!"

"Great heavens! then our escape is impossible," replied Mabel.

"With me, it is; but you, Mabel, can go and I'll do the best I can."

"No, no, Nora. I will never leave you behind—*never*! What is your fate shall be mine."

"Then we must try some other way to escape while the timber conceals us from the savages' view; for, see—Eagle is getting so lame that I can scarcely sit upon him."

"But what shall we do, Nora?"

"Conceal ourselves in the bushes and allow our animals to go on. Perhaps they may run a long ways before the Indians discover they are riderless, and in this way we may elude them—here."

As she spoke she drew rein beneath the boughs of a low scrubby oak whose foliage was almost a dense mat—excluding every ray of light.

"In this tree let us hide, Mabel; we can climb into it from the backs of our animals and leave no mark nor trace of our hiding-place."

"How very thoughtful you are, Nora," said Mabel, riding her horse beneath the tree.

With all care, and without the least difficulty, the fugitives climbed from the backs of their animals into the low branches, and then stooping, Nora gave the animals a cut with a stick that sent them flying through the woods with renewed strength—Eagle seeming to have suddenly recovered from his lameness.

Scarcely had the maidens seated themselves comfortably among the dark branches, when Red Hand made his appearance. He was riding on a slow gallop, and leaning forward and to one side—his eyes fixed upon the hoof-prints of the fugitives' horses. On beneath the tree—on through the woods beyond, he dashed, his savages following close at his heels.

"Thank Heaven! we are safe for awhile, at least," sighed Mabel, in much relief.

"Yes, and I think we had better remain here until dark, do you not?" asked Nora.

"By all means, dear Nora; it will not be long all night, for the sun is almost down."

And the poor, wearied, hungry fugitives locked their arms around each other to await the coming of nightfall.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CRY OF LOVE.

THE last rays of the setting sun had faded into twilight, and twilight deepened into the gloomy darkness that settled over the great prairie and the green woodland. The face of the moon was obscured by the dark, misshapen clouds that went scurrying across the sky, but now and then a star would peep forth from the rifts—a feeble ray of light through the awful gloom. A gentle breeze whispered to the forest-leaves, as though it had some secret to tell—not intended for the ears of the two pale, weary fugitives that sat concealed within the forest-depth and gloom, listening and watching, alas, for what?

Nora Raymond and Mabel Prescott did not leave their retreat when night set in as they had intended. When darkness hid every object from view, their fears became manifold. Every slight noise sounded to them like the stealthy foot-steps of a savage, and they dare not move nor speak above a whisper, for fear that the wind would convey their words to the ear of some lurking foe.

The moments stole wearily by and drifted into hours, and still the fugitives moved not from their retreat. Suddenly, however, their ears caught the unmistakable tramp of many feet and the sound of voices. They listened, and found that a party of savages were approaching. With their hands pressed upon their throbbing breasts, the maidens scarcely breathed. In a moment the savages were directly before them, and, to the fugitives' terror, they stopped there. They

could plainly hear the shuffling feet and gathering voices, and shortly a tiny speck of light pierced the gloom below; then it gradually grew larger and larger until a roving camp-fire was burning beneath them, sending up smoke and heat that was almost suffocating; and it required every effort for the girls to keep from coughing. Presently, however, they became accustomed to the smoke and ventured to peer down through the foliage upon the motley crowd of red-skins that had seated themselves around the fire, some smoking, some talking and some gazing stoically into the fire—all apparently unconscious of the maidens' presence. Red Hand was not among them, which fact greatly eased the minds of the unwilling captives, who now ventured to converse in a low whisper.

In a few moments more the deep silence was broken by the tramping of horses' feet. The savages sprang quickly up and advanced toward the horsemen. It proved to be another party of savages.

The fugitives listened, but could recognize no familiar voice: then they parted the foliage and peered through at the new party. As they did so, a cry, that reached the ears of the savages, escaped Mabel's lips, for, bound and fettered upon one of the animals, she recognized her lover, Frank Harwood; but the sight was none the less startling to Nora, for upon another animal she recognized her bear, Captain Stanfield, a captive, also!

How came they captives there? Let us see: When Frank arrived at the Post with Miss Stump, he found that the swelling and pain had about left his arm, and, being in terrible suspense, could not remain idle; so, appropriating one of the fleetest horses of the settlers, he started off to Fort Des Moines to secure the assistance of some of the troops garrisoned there to quell the sullen uprising of the Indians. But the commanding officer of the post had got news of the sullen outbreak, and had already sent a party of soldiers on their Captain Stanfield to the field of action. Fortunately, Frank met the captain on the way and at once made known his business and wants. Captain Stanfield and Frank had known each other all their lives. They had been neighbor boys in their native State; studied together from the same

books; hunting and fishing together; sympathizing with each other in their troubles and boyish mishaps until a feeling had grown up between them like that of brothers. And when they had grown to men's estate, and the spirit of adventure led one to breast the dangers of the frontier, the other followed; and though circumstances placed them in different positions, their old-time affection was just the same. And when Frank had told his friend of Mabel's captivity, he resolved then and there to assist him to rescue her if it took them years; so, sending his men on toward the Post under his first lieutenant, Captain Stanfield and Frank set off alone toward the grove where Mabel was last seen. Unfortunately, the young men were captured by a party of ambushed savages, almost the moment they entered the grove; and being bound and disarmed, they were placed upon their animals again and carried away toward the Indian village; and in this condition we find them when their captors halted before the camp fire of their red brethren.

Scarcely had the involuntary cry escaped Mabel's lips at sight of her lover, than she discovered what a terrible blunder she had committed, for almost instantly the savages' eyes were peering up into the dark foliage.

"Oh, Nora! Nora!" she sobbed, in a whisper, "I have been a weak fool, but I could not help it; I have revealed our presence!"

"True, Mabel, the savages heard you, but as they are not the ones that were with Red Hand, they know not but that *one person* is hidden here; and if one of us will hurry down before they discover both, the other may escape and bring friends to the rescue."

"Then I will descend, Nora; for were I to remain, I would be just thoughtless enough to reveal my presence. Good-by, and may God bless and aid you, dear Nora," and Mabel at once began the descent, for the savages were preparing torches to examine the double darkness of their retreat among the thick foliage.

In a moment, Mabel, pale and sad, stood upon the ground in the full glare of the camp-fire. A low murmur of surprise and admiration passed from savage to savage, and a deep, heart-felt groan burst from her lover's lips.

"Mabel! my suffering darling! Oh, that I could assist you!"

"Oh, Frank! Frank! Has Heaven forsaken us?" and she rushed wildly, with outstretched arms, toward her lover, but a savage caught her and held her fast. She struggled, but in vain.

"Do not worry yourself, dear Mabel," said Frank; "it is useless while you are in the power of these demons. Be thankful that we are near to each other."

These words were balm to her sorrowing heart—joy and peace to her tortured mind, and she became calm and resigned.

True enough, the savages did not make any farther search among the branches after they saw Mabel descend therefrom; but little did they think that another fair creature, brave and noble, was concealed there.

Parting the foliage slightly, Nora gazed down into the face of her lover, which she thought she had never seen look so sad and yet so beautiful since first he came wooing her at the settlement.

A savage had dressed himself in the young captain's coat and cap, and buckled on his sword and belt, and went strutting around with great pomposity, though looking about as comical and as much like a man as a gorilla dressed in soldier's clothing.

After a few moments' halt, one of the savages dismounted, and Mabel was placed upon the horse's back. Then the cavalcade moved on, and, to Nora's great joy, the savages on foot accompanied them; and as their footfalls died away in the gloomy distance, she sighed from her sense of relief.

She now became thoughtful as to the course she would pursue, in order to relieve her own sad situation and that of her friends: but hardly had she determined on any course, whatever, when she was again startled by the sound of footsteps and human voices.

Cautiously parting the leaves she peered down, and, to her joy and delight, she saw issue from the undergrowth into the light of the waning camp-fire, her father, Thede Thornpath, Egypt and Josiah Jenkins!

CHAPTER XIV:

THE TRAIL CLOSED.

In a few moments Nora made known her presence and had descended to the ground and was clasped joyfully to her father's breast. All was soon explained in regard to Mabel's whereabouts, as well as that of Frank Harwood and Captain Standfield, though it was quite puzzling to the mind of Thornpath as to how they came to be captives.

In hopes of overtaking the savages before they reached the stronghold of their village, the party at once set off to follow them. Nora *would* go along; so her father put her upon his horse, while he walked with the rest of the men.

Thornpath took the trail, and though it was quite dark, he followed it easier than his companions could follow him.

Gradually the night wore away and found them still upon the trail. At daybreak they halted and partook of a breakfast of boiled venison, then resumed their journey, much refreshed.

Noon found them just entering the great belt of timber bordering the North Cheapeake river, having completely lost sight of those they were following, yet they were some ten miles from the Indian village.

Half this distance had been passed when Egypt, who was some distance in the rear, came running up and informed the hunters that an Indian squaw, mounted upon a black pony and leading a heavily-loaded pack-animal, was coming a short distance behind.

For fear that the squaw would discover them and convey to the village and give news of their approach, the hunters concluded to conceal themselves and capture her. So Nora rode off to one side and the men concealed themselves in some underbrush. As the squaw approached them, George Raymond recognized her to be a young half-breed princess whom he had often seen at the settlement. She was young and beautiful, with dark, flashing eyes, regular Anglo-Saxon

features, and dark hair, not like the Indians', but short and wavy like Nora's.

She was riding a beautiful black pony, which, as she neared the spot where the whites were concealed, became fretful and uneasy.

The animal she was leading was a sorry-looking, jaded creature, heavily loaded with numerous bundles of things done up in Indian blankets.

Without the least trouble she was captured, and when Nora came up, she recognized her as the Princess Wannamiah, whom she had often met and conversed with at the settlement, and whom she, in company with Captain Stanfield, had often visited in her own cosy little lodge at the Indian village when the savages were at peace.

"Golly!" exclaimed Egypt, when Nora came up, glancing first at her and then the princess, "dat Ingin gal, Miss Nora, am your second se'f."

"I was just going to remark, Nora," said her father, "that you and the princess resemble each other, somewhat, in form and features."

"That's my ticket, too," put in Josiah Jenkins.

"Wal, sence ye all think so, I do, too," said the old Trailer, who was busying himself among the bundles on the pack-animal.

"Then it must be so," returned Nora, "and since it is so, why can't I pass for the princess and go into the village and release the captives?"

"But your complexion, Nora, would betray you," said her father.

"But, father—"

"Ho! ho! ho!" laughed Thornpath, as he tore open one of the bundles, "here's the stuff to fix up the complexion—Carl Oakley's wardrobe—Red Hand's toilet, as I'm born to die—ho! ho! ho!"

True enough; he had found the clothes worn by Oakley the last day he had been seen at the settlement; and there was a small looking-glass, several boxes of different-colored paint, some feathers and rings, and other savage paraphernalia used by the renegade in disguising himself.

"Yes, here, father," said Nora, picking up a box of browns

other, "here is something that will give me Wannamiah's complexion, exactly."

The father saw the possibility of such an object, but he remonstrated against his daughter attempting it; but Nora was obstinate as she was brave, and he was finally induced to give up to her disguising herself as the princess, and entering the Indian village and try to liberate her friends and lover. In fact, this seemed the only chance for the prisoners.

So a small tent was constructed of blankets and poles, and Nora and the princess entered. Nora then proposed to change dresses with the Indian girl, but she obstinately refused. But by the presentation of her tiny revolver and a mild threat, Miss Wannamiah's obstinacy was overcome and the change was made. Nora then painted her face and neck, her dimpled, snowy hands and arms, and then emerged from the tent, and not until she had spoken, could her father tell but that she ~~was~~ the princess, so complete was the disguise.

"How do I look, father? Like a squaw?" she asked, smiling.

"Quite so, Nora; the disguise is perfect, so far as dress and color are concerned. Now if you can only carry out the deception."

"I will try that, father; you know I can speak the language quite fluently. But I must be off, for I want to enter the village about dusk."

Nora was assisted to the back of the princess' pony, and then bidding her friends adieu, rode away.

Her father watched until she had disappeared in the distance; then he turned away, muttering:

"Brave, noble and fearless girl."

Flora had rode on and on until the sun had gone down. Finally the sound of children's voices and the barking of dogs announced her near approach to the village of Red Hall. When she reached the outskirts it was dark, but she saw enough to start the cold blood through her veins.

The village was laid out something after the manner of our modern towns. There was a large, open space left for a square or council-ground, while around it hundreds of lodges were regularly arranged. In the center of the square Nora saw two green posts being erected with great ceremony, by the

light of numerous large fires that were burning in front of the lodges—it being the duty of every family to build a fire in front of their tent to light up the council-ground when any thing of more than ordinary interest was going on. This Nora knew, and by sight of the posts that were being erected, and the long lines of twinkling camp-fires, the hurry and bustle of the savages, that preparations were being made for the execution of the male prisoners.

No time was to be lost, and hurrying forward she entered the village with as little concern as the *real* princess would have done. Giving the pony the reins, it moved on, and finally stopped before a lodge, which, from the knowledge gained by her former visits, she knew was the Princess Wannamiah's. Dismounting, an Indian came and took the pony, and she turned and entered the tent, which she found neatly and luxuriously furnished with all that the heart of an Indian queen could wish for.

She had just seated herself when Red Hand entered.

"Wannamiah comes late to-night," he said, in English.

"Yes. I have ridden far, and am wearied," she replied, in the Indian dialect, with assumed indifference, yet noting the chief's countenance.

"And does the princess not know what times there is in the village to-night?"

"No."

"Two pale faces are to be scalped, then burned; and Red Hand is to be married to a pale-face squaw."

Nora smiled, though her heart seemed pierced with a dagger.

"Where are the pale-faces?" she asked, a slight tremor in her voice, though Red Hand was too much absorbed in hellish glee to note the fact.

"The pale-faces that are to be burned are in the first lodge north of yours, and the pretty squaw is the first one south of yours. You must carry supper to them before they are burnt; and go and cheer the heart of the white lily. Will Wannamiah do it?"

"Wannamiah loves to please the great chief," she said.

Red Hand turned and left the tent. Nora arose and went out after him, and going to the first tent south of hers, she

entered it. True, Mabel was there, lying upon a pallet of furs, sobbing as if her heart would break. She was entirely alone.

"Mabel," Nora said, softly.

Mabel lifted her head and would have cried out with joy, had Nora not placed her hand upon her mouth and whispered :

"Silence, dear Mabel ; speak not above a breath."

"Oh, Nora ! Nora ! how dare you come here ?" she asked, in a whisper.

"As the Princess Wannamiah, Mabel ; the disguise is perfect. I have talked with Red Hand and he mistrusts nothing. But we must act quick and cautiously before some of those more observing Indians meet me. They are all with over the preparations for our lovers' execution. Here is a knife ; keep it concealed, and in ten minutes cut a hole in the back side of your tent and crawl out. Then crawl along the shadow cast by your tent, until you come to where it crosses the shadow of the large tent directly north of this one. Then wait, and Frank and Richard will join you. Remember—be careful, cautious and quick," and Nora turned and left the tent.

She now went to the other captives' tent. At the door stood a guard, but as Princess Wannamiah was a privileged character, she entered the tent without ceremony.

She found the prisoners sitting upon the ground with their hands tied and then made fast to a post driven in the ground at their backs. As she entered, the captives looked up, and through that holy communion or telegraph that exists between two loving hearts, Richard Stanfield was enabled to perceive Nora's disguise. She saw it, and, placing her finger to her lips enjoined silence ; then stooping, she whispered in Captain Stanfield's ear :

"Dear Richard, you are condemned to die at the stake ; but I will release you, and then you must escape. As soon as I leave, take this knife and cut out of the tent at the back side. Then crawl out and along in the shadow cast by your tent until you come to where it crosses the shadow cast by the next tent south. There you will find Mabel—"

"And you, dear Nora ?"

"Yes, if I can get away unobserved; but if I am not there, do not wait. I will meet you at the settlement. At the point where Indian Creek enters the timber you will meet father, Thede Thornpath, Egypt and Josiah Jenkins. Now, remember," and taking the knife, she severed the bonds that bound the two captives, then she turned and left the tent.

She entered her own tent again with the intention of leaving it from the back side, but what was her bitter disappointment on entering to find Red Hand seated therein. Of course she dare not order him out, and it was fully ten minutes before he left. Then it was too late, for, if the captives had done as she had arranged, they were then beyond the limits of the village; so she could do nothing but wait and watch her own chances for escape.

On leaving the princess' tent, Red Hand turned and entered that of Mabel, but, alas, the bird had flown!

Cursing and foaming like a madman, he rushed from the tent, calling wildly on his braves to scatter and search for his lost prize. In the mean time, the guard at the other captives' tent, discovered that his prisoners had escaped, also, and announced the fact with a frightful yell. In a moment the village was a perfect Pandemonium. Warriors, squaws and children all rushed and crowded here and there in the wildest confusion. Nora went out and mingled with them in order to avoid suspicion. In five minutes' time not a warrior remained in the village; all were out scouting through the woods like pointers in search of the missing captives.

After awhile Nora retired to her own tent and fastened the door, through which no one dare enter after the Princess Wammin had retired. Cutting a hole in the tent, she looked out to see what was going on; she could not lie down and sleep. In the course of an hour the warriors began to return with defeat written upon their dusky faces, and, like cows, they stalked away to their tents. In a short time the village was wrapped in silence. The camp-fires burned low, and all that Nora could see was two grim-looking posts standing side by side in the center of the council ground, or now and then a shadowy form stalking about in the pale light of the waning camp-fires, no less as the grave.

Slowly the night wore away and morning dawned bright

and clear. Breakfast of roasted venison and parched maize was brought in to the princess, which she ate with a good appetite.

Shortly after sunrise, Nora saw an Indian lead the princess' pony up to the tent door. She remembered then that the princess was in the habit of taking a morning ramble through the woods on horseback.

This was Nora's opportunity, and in a few moments she was mounted upon the animal and galloping out the village. Once beyond the limits she shaped her course for the settlement, that was now over twenty miles away.

Two hours' sharp riding brought her to the edge of the great prairie, at the southern extremity of which lay the settlement. As she emerged from the timber, she saw an Indian whom she recognized as Red Hand, riding all alone some distance in advance. Riding briskly forward she soon drew rein at his side.

"Where is the Princess Wannamiah going?" he asked, gruffly, scarcely noticing her.

"A-riding with her gallant knight of paint and feathers," Nora replied, in her natural voice.

Quick as a flash the chief whirled in his saddle, and to his surprise and horror found himself facing that murderous-looking little revolver of Nora Raymond! Again he was in the toils!

"Move not a muscle, Carl Oakley, under penalty of instant death!" she said, in a firm, commanding tone. "Murderer and traitor, blind in your own sin, you know not that I, in the disguise of the Princess Wannamiah, entered your village and released those whom you would have put to death last night. Think you not that the judgment of God is upon you?"

"Not if you are the judgment," the chief gathered courage to reply.

"I's de chile will be judgment, Carl Oakley."

"And I'm another, Mister Red Hand!"

The chief turned to find two guns in the hands of Egypt and Thede Thornpath pointed full at his breast. They had been concealed in the tall grass waiting his approach.

"For God's sake, spare me," the villain gasped, in terror.

"Dismount den and surrender," commanded Egypt.

"Yes, down and give an account o' yerself," added Thede.

There was no alternative but for the defeated renegade to obey, and like a condemned criminal he dismounted from his animal, which Nora took and rode on over the hill to meet her friends.

CHAPTER XV.

"LIFTING H'AR."

WHEN Nora had disappeared over the brow of the hill, Thornpath turned to Red Hand and said :

"So, my lively fellow, yer game's 'bout up, and now ye can say yerself how ye shall meet yer doom—whether by roastin' alive or by the tomahawk."

The villain staggered, and his features became convulsed with terror. There was a nervous twitching about his lips as he gathered breath to reply :

"True, I'm your prisoner, Thede Thornpath, and as such I expect to be treated."

"Do de Ingings treat dar pris'ners wid respect?" asked Egypt.

The renegade made no reply, but looked as though he would sink with terror at any moment.

"No, they do not," said the old Trailer, answering for him ; "they allers burn, brain and skulp their captives, and since you, Carl Oakley, are the head devil o' the caboodle, your life orter be tortured outen your vile body by inches."

"Dat's so, and de sooner de better," replied Egypt.

"Say how it shall be, Oakley," said Thornpath, laying his hand upon the hilt of his knife ; "we've no time to lose."

"Oh I spare my life," the miserable wretch groaned, trembling like an aspen—his face rigid with terror.

"Do you think you deserve to live after causin' the death o' scores o' innocent wemin and children?" asked the old Trailer.

"I—I admit I have done wrong ; I am willin' to repent ; I will leave the country ; I will do any thing if you will only spare my life."

"I wouldn't give *that* for yer word, Carl Oakley," replied Thornpath, snapping his fingers. "I allers thought ye war a sneakin' cuss."

"Try me, only try me, and if I prove untrue then you can punish me. Only spare my life," pleaded the wretch.

For a moment Thornpath was silent. He was thinking—thinking of a just punishment for the red-handed scoundrel, one that would bring upon him all the sufferings that his victims had endured.

There was no mercy in the Trailer's heart for the wretch; it had been hardened by the sight of burning cabins and desolate homes, suffering captives and hellish barbarism, of which Red Hand had been the prime instigator. He knew that he was an unmitigated coward as well as traitor, and that in order to spare or save his life would submit to any disgrace or dishonor, and as an idea flashed in his mind, the Trailer said:

"Should we spare your life, Carl Oakley, you must agree to live 'mongst the Indians in disgrace and dishonor all yer days, and if yer ever cotched amongst white folks, yer to be cooked alive the minit ye are cotched."

"And I's de chile to witness de 'greement," said Egypt, as an inkling of the old Trailer's intention flashed in his mind.

"I agree—I promise—I swear!" exclaimed the renegade, a ray of hope gleaming in his evil eyes. "I am willing to submit to any thing so my life is spared."

"Then, you must *submit to have yer scalp lifted*," said the old Trailer, "for in no other way would ye be more dishonored by the red-skins."

"Oh, Lord! it would kill me!" groaned the renegade.

"All but that," replied Thornpath, "many o' yer victims hev survived sich a ordeal as witnesses o' yer devilish wickedness."

This was more than Red Hand had anticipated. When his captors had first spoken of pardoning him, he supposed it would be on his word and honor, and he secretly resolved, the moment he was free, to wreak a terrible vengeance on the whites. But, alas! The excruciating thought of giving up his scalp! though, it was not the scalp nor the pain that would be induced by taking it, but the dishonor it would bring upon him in the eyes of the Indians.

Above all things, a scalpless warrior among the American Indians is a creature of the lowest disgrace; it is considered the mark of cowardice. No chief nor prophet, having lost his scalp by the hands of an enemy, ever was allowed to hold power over his people afterward, but was thrown into bonds and kept as an object of derision until death released him. This Thornpath knew, hence his object in punishing Oakley in such a way.

There was a few moment's silence, then the Trailer resumed
"Ye kin take yer choice, Oakley; give us yer life or skulp, and thet in a hurry."

"Is that your only—"

"That's the *only* terms," interrupted Thornpath.

"It will kill me—it will kill me, but I will submit to fate; but remember, if I die my blood will be upon your hands."

"Wal, it will be the blood o' atonement—the blood o' a fiend," replied Thornpath; "so ye mout as well git down here and let's hev the affair over with."

The villain groaned, and, like the coward that he was, bowed his head. Thornpath tore off the gaudy head-dress. Egypt drew his keen-edged knife, and—

Red Hand was forever dishonored and disgraced as an Indian chief. No more, with his scalpless head, would he wear the plumes of royalty and power. It was a bloody and—what we would consider in this day—a heartless act, but it was a just punishment.

The wound bled profusely, the blood running in little rivulets down his paint-bedaubed face. Thornpath took a strip of the villain's blanket and assisted very kindly to bind up his head, then said:

"Now ye kin go, Carl Oakley. Ye are free, but remember the conditions upon which your life's been spared. I'll trail ye to yer death ef ever ye are seen ag'in around the settlements."

"Cursed be that will never save you, curse you!" the villain mumbled, and, turning, he moved slowly away, an inward fire seeming to consume his brain.

Thornpath and Egypt watched him until he had disappeared behind a swell in the prairie, then they turned and moved away in the direction that Nora had gone. An hour's walk-

ing brought them into a narrow, wooded ravine wherein Matel Prescott and her father and lover, Nora and her father and lover, and the real Princess Wannamiah were encamped.

Nora and her father took leave of their friends, after she had rested, and returned to their home at Slaughter's settlement, Nora's lover accompanying them. The rest of our party returned to the Post and found their friends anxiously awaiting their return.

The Post was rebuilt, and though it was for a long time a frontier settlement, it was never molested by savages again.

In the course of time, there was a wedding at Slaughter's settlement, and, also, one at the Post, and the reader can easily guess who the happy couple were.

And I have been informed that Miss Stump really did jilt Josiah Jenkins and marry another man, though I can not vouch for the truthfulness of the report.

Thornpath, the Trailer, and Egypt continued their nomadic calling. Away up in the North-west, we may hear from them again.

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